

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *TWO VOLUMES.*

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

By Mrs. BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF THE
WELCH HEIRESS, and JUVENILE INDISCRETIONS.

I know thou wilt grumble, courteous Reader, for every Reader in the World is a Grumbletonian more or less; and for my Part, I can grumble as well as the best of ye, when it is my turn to be a Reader.

SCARRON.

VOL. II.

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AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

L E T T E R I.

Agnes to the Lady Abbess St. Laurens.

Greenwich.

I Have hitherto, my beloved St. Clare, and lady Abbess, been successful in my plan; but am unfortunately prevented from immediately putting the most important part of it into execution; which is that of setting out on my long'd-for return to you.

When I concluded my last letter (which from what unhappy cause I am yet to learn I dare hardly hope has reached you) I told you, Monsieur Mitard was on the point of going out to attend on some female acquaintance, but recollecting, as I supposed, the commission he had received to watch my motions, he suddenly pleaded an engagement and returned.

I had put up, in as small a compass as would contain them, a couple of dimity dresses, and some linen; and descended softly with it, as far as the front parlour, which apartment is occupied by the woman of the house, where the Mitard's lodge, who luckily happened to be out of the way: I had hardly time, when I saw the man return, to lay down my bundle, before he approached me, and begged to have the honor of entertaining me one half hour; I understood this request as a pretence for keeping me in his sight, and with great affected indifference, walked up again into their drawing room.

I know not how to wound you with the humiliating recital; the man actually had the effrontery to make me a flaming declaration of love—offered immediately to place me out of the knowledge of Lord Morden, who was a very *bad man*, and of his wife, who also was a very *bad woman*, and in short, gave me additional proofs, had those been wanting, that it was quite time for me to get out of their hands.

I smothered my indignation as well as I could, but Monsieur was perfectly informed by my looks, that his passion was not likely to be successful, and he had in consequence of that information the assurance to threaten me with his important resentment.

I left him apparently much enraged at the sang froid of my behaviour, and traversing the room in great heat; to my inexpressible joy he threw the door after me in scorn, and I took that opportunity again to slip down stairs, stepped into the parlour for my bundle, and having gained the street, deliberately walked to a stand of coaches, and ordered one to drive to Greenwich;



wich; where on enquiry I found Mr. Arnold was well known, and easily procured directions to his house.

He was at home; and I was conducted into a large parlour, where, though little more than nine o'clock, the family were at supper.

I had, during my ride, so far altered my first plan, that I did not open myself without reserve to Mr. Arnold, as I had intended; but told him simply that a Mrs. du Bois, had recommended his packet to me, as the quickest conveyance to France, whither I was desirous to return, and requested to know his terms for the voyage: Oh! he said, we should not fall out, he had always done Mrs. du Bois's business, and he believed she would not upbraid him with extortion.—I then asked him when he should go. It was not quite certain, he said, as he waited for the arrival of some India ships, he was engaged to meet, and could not sail before they arrived.

That, I acknowledged, was inconvenient to me, as I had come to Greenwich expecting, from Mrs. du Bois's account, to have an immediate passage, and was not provided with lodgings: Mrs. Arnold believed I might be accommodated next door with an apartment; and offered to send her servant to enquire.

I have not been able to account for it, for this woman is one of the most unamiable dispositions I have ever known; but during the absence of the servant, after having fixed a pair of most formidable eyes on me for some time, she whisper'd her husband, a plain, honest, ignorant man; and at length (observing I believe my looks were not the most tranquil) said, she hoped I would not make myself uneasy, for that if Mrs.

Fanning's rooms were engaged, I should be welcome to an apartment in her house, 'till Mr. Arnold sailed.

I was lucky enough to express my acknowledgments in a manner that seemed to gratify her; from a slight invitation, she proceeded to insist upon my being her guest; and immediately sent another servant to put an end to the treaty with her neighbour. A chair was then set at the table, and hearty invitations given me to join their meal, which I was too much agitated to accept, having a violent head-ach: I retired early, not to rest, but to unburden all my cares to my beloved friends; who, if ever I should see them again, will be convinced their Agnes truly repents the first, and only concealment, she ever made from them.

There sat at table, madam, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold; a young woman about two and twenty their only daughter, very much dressed, and rather handsome; three boys their sons, and a pretty young creature about seventeen, who very much excited my curiosity; they call her Betsy, and affect to treat her as an inferior, at the same moment, when she sits perfectly at ease, commanding the whole family—she has an air of great dignity, and at times pride—but in general there is an arch sweetness, and playful gaiety in her manner, which renders her very pleasing: I could not help fixing my attention so much on her, as to draw the observation of Mrs. Arnold, who followed me to my chamber, for the sole purpose of informing me—Betsy was the orphan daughter of a poor clergyman, who was come up to London, to be apprenticed by the fund, a charitable

charitable institution as she explained, for the benefit of the children of the inferior clergy.

Now, continued Mrs. Arnold, both Mr. Arnold and myself are very tender hearted; and so we thought we might as well keep the poor thing, and make her useful in the family; she has agreed indeed to pay for her board, 'till some friend comes to town, from whom she has expectations, but as I say, Lord! where is she to get money? and so I tell her, but she is so flighty, and whimsical, there is no such thing as making her think; she was recommended to us by Mr. Arnold's sister, who lives with a great lady in the country.

I thanked Mrs. Arnold for her communications; who hinted, that the reason she favored me with such an early mark of confidence, was, for fear I should, as many others had done, take Bessy for a young woman of fortune, and her Naticy's equal.

Surely, my dear madam, I have not in every article, forgot your moral instructions; whatever may be Mrs. Arnold's natural disposition, her behaviour to me has been hitherto civil; nay, it has even been friendly; yet my heart retreats from the union of mind such conduct *should* create; she is indeed extremely low bred, and, like her husband, ever barbarously abusing the English language, by misplacing the sound of letters, and mistaking, not only the pronunciation of words, but their meaning also; by which means their conversation, is a compound of vulgarity, and ignorance: but, as it is my fate, or rather the effect of my folly, that I should be cast among people so very different from the dear, the polite, and friendly society, where I received my first ideas, I must reconcile myself to what I

cannot, now, avoid: whatever evils, or mortification I may in the world be subject to, I *know where* I shall be at peace.

I am going, my dear friends, sweet, and ever respected guides of my youth, to implore the protection of the holy virgin, may be extended to my soul; and that I may live and die, in the pure practice of every virtue, you have taught me to revere: and oh! my dear lady Abbess! honored St. Clare! may I venture without injuring those virtues, to repeat to you a name, never out of my thoughts.

I am, it is true, displeased, and with reason; Edward Harley, that amiable! that accomplished! that modest young man! dared to accuse Agnes de Courci of immoral conduct; he presumed to wound my ears with tales of the blackest calumny, levelled against my better self; and had the barbarity to tell me, he was himself of the number of my calumniators; for this I certainly ought to hate, to despise him—ah! madam, dear St. Clare! I am a weak, a very weak creature; it is thus I reason with my wayward heart; but spight of all my efforts, his elegant form, his delicate manners, and the rectitude of his principles; form an agreement, that rushes between my reason and my imagination, wholly obscuring the one, while the other brightens into rapture.

I wish he was known to you; I wish—ah how vainly! he had once presented himself at your grate; you would surely think favorably of him; his address is at once, simple and refined—and his voice—do you not remember how St. Clare once expatiated on the power of a melodious voice?—“It is pleasant even in common conversation,

versation, it softens severity and it enhances kindness (said the dear saint) but when we hear the comfortable tenets of the scripture—the absolution of sin, pronounced in a voice of melody, it pierces with delightful extacy into the soul.”

Let my beloved St. Laurens, hide in your friendly, your maternal bosom; the burning blushes of your Agnes, when she confesses, this man—this Harley’s voice, has that very effect on her, which the bishop at Abbeville’s has on St. Clare—it continually vibrates on my ears, and even when I sleep, it is ever present to my ideas—observe madam, in extenuation of his offence, he was himself in despair at the situation in which the barbarous tongue of slander had placed me; he wished to reform me, to convince me of the errors he supposed me fascinated with; he offered me, the protection of a virtuous woman, his sister; and he pleaded, heavens with what eloquence! the cause of an injured, deserted matron.

Alas! madam, was it for him; whose own open heart might have been scrutinized by infant candour, to read mine? to develop the labyrinths in which human cunning conceals its depravity? how often have I seen his fine eyes fill, as he contemplated my features; how frequently have the scalding messengers of pity drop’d on my hands; and oh! how many, many times, have the agonies of his swelling heart obliged him to rush out of company; and when I have followed—have I not found him despairing, and frantic; the cold drops standing on his forehead; yet has the voice of your Agnes, instantly calmed the tempest of his soul; and by the mere simple efforts of com-

mon civility, held all his unruly passions, captives in the bonds of reason.

Suffer me, dear madam, to carry you in imagination with me to his own little demesne; delight your ears with the faltering blessings of the old, the fervent gratitude of the middle aged, the lisping, and familiar, but not less sincere good will of infancy, all following the steps of my Harley; while his own effulgent eyes, bright with the emanation of benevolence, and charity, dare turn from those grateful dependants, to that *being*, who judges the *motive* with the *act*, in equal confidence and security.

Let us wander through the delightful groves which surround his neat dwelling, where we shall be surprised into a pleasing wonder; religion, romance, and passion; seem to have blended their powers in the decorations, and ornaments of this sacred solitude: behold my Harley, with what manly sense he distinguishes, with what true taste he explains, with what sensibility he glows, and with what reverential ardor he preserves the reliques of fond affection, bequeathed him by an amiable and maternal friend.

Oh! madam, pity your

AGNES.

L E T T E R II.

*Agnes in continuation.**Greenwich.*

THESE people, the Arnolds, do not grow in estimation on acquaintance, yet to *me* they are civility itself.

I am persuaded there is more in the character of the young person I described to you than they know ; she treats me with a familiar kind of affection which is far from displeasing, but the family are so much the objects of her contempt, that I am obliged to look exceedingly grave, to keep her in any kind of order when she speaks of them.

I was passing the door of her apartment this morning, when she called after me—Miss—Miss Thingimy, come here, I want to speak with you. I gravely asked, if it was *me* she addressed ?

She answered in the affirmative, quite unembarrassed, and as soon as I entered, shut the door ; then pointing to a table, where lay a piece of cloth, and a boy's shirt not very clean, do you know, asked she, very seriously, how to cut out a shirt ?

I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the question, and yet upon consideration I really did not, she looked earnestly in my face—why child ! you are as ignorant as myself then, but keep your own secret ; for if you acknowledge so much.

much to Madam Fussock, you will be set down as a mighty worthless body; come, do be seated, and let us try if we cannot contrive it between us—here, continued she, (taking the shirt up between the handles of her scissars) this is the pattern.

I protested my inability—well now, that is so stupid.

I thought, said I, your mother who had so large a family (she burst into an immoderate fit of laughter) would have taught you those little matters.

To be sure, answered she, 'tis mighty odd she did not—if—if (smothering another laughing fit) she knew herself. All this time she was turning and twisting the cloth—no, 'twont do, I'll even go and return Madam Fussock her cloth, and give my young lady a lesson on her humstrum, do you understand musick?—a little.

Well then, by way of conferring a favor on you, for which I expect you will be very grateful, I'll shew you a lesson, I have been composing for my pupil's improvement.

This was a sheet of music paper, filled with such a combination of flats, sharps, quavers, semibreves; that I saw directly she was turning the science into ridicule, or rather playing on the folly of the Arnolds.

Come, said she, snatching the paper out of my hand, I see you know too much—

And if, said I, I were to acquaint Mrs. Arnold?

You dare not.

How madam?

I know you dare not, your heart will not let you.

Why

Why should you fancy my heart will do more for you, than yours for Madam. Fusslock as you call her?

Oh! that is quite another thing— we are of a different order of beings.

Indeed! but methinks you should speak for yourself only, without venturing to pronounce for me, who am so great a stranger.

Really child, answered she, seriously, you mistake the thing very much—you are no stranger to me at all.

Recollect, madam, the consequence it is of to me to be concealed, and you will conceive the alarm I felt, when the volatile girl made so unexpected a declaration.

Not a stranger to you, Miss, replied I, very coldly, pray where have I had the honor of being known to you before?

Oh! no where, but there is, I have heard say, one infallible rule, by which spirits of a certain description, become familiar with each other; and that is by the sympathy of generous, and elevated sentiments; you, I perceived within the first hour of our acquaintance, are of that description; no matter what I am, you will know some time or other; but *such as I am*, you see I cannot level myself to the people I am with: yet, though I do not esteem, I do not hate the creatures; they amuse me, and while they fancy I am the object of their ostentatious charity, they are in reality slaves to my whim, and caprice; they like me in spite of the tricks I play them, and are so fearful of disobliging me, that the authority, and influence, I insensibly gain over them, is a confirmation of my favorite thesis, “the power of sympathy,” which even these stupid people cannot

cannot resist; they think me the orphan daughter of a poor country parson, whose large family kept him in a state of too much poverty, to provide for his offspring: and to a young girl, so situated, the asylum their family affords would perhaps be very acceptable. They are of the order of *little* great folks, who would surely be proud to make a dependant *feel* their obligation; yet you see, they are actually afraid of disobliging me, they are no less civil to you, and what can the involuntary humanization of such savages proceed from, *but sympathy?*

They *take* you for a poor parson's daughter, then you are *not* so in reality, said I, looking earnestly at her.

She coloured excessively, and answered,

Miss Mary Farquar, for that I think is your travelling name—when you are disposed to exchange confidence with me, I will be ready to renew this conversation; till when, I wish (laughing) for your own sake, you could cut out a shirt; I suppose you can embroider, fillet-gree, draw, and all the useless et-cetera's; but let me advise you to learn to work plain work; which the good lady of this mansion, avers is the ground of all female perfection; and so Miss Mary Farquar—bon jour.

You will confess, my dear madam, this young person is an extraordinary character; but I dare not trust her too far; she is not only young, and volatile, but giddy, and thoughtless to excess.

Mr. Arnold, and his wife, are doatingly fond of their daughter, who is rather a handsome girl; but unhappily, has heard from her ill-judging parents, so much of her beauty; and from
her

her infancy, been taught to expect so much from its influence; she has rejected several young men in her own station of life, in expectation of attracting the regard of some person of fashion; which has been her invariable pursuit from the age of seventeen, and which she still flatters herself will happen: Betsy as they call her owes, they fancy, her irresistible power of pleasing to her accomplishments; they are therefore exceedingly anxious, Miss Arnold shall equal her in those; as to person, there is, they think, no comparison.

The poor beauty, as Betsy calls her, is really in a pitiable situation; every day opens with fresh hopes, which the evening is sure to prove fallacious; new dresses, and graces, are constantly exhibited at the windows, and in walks up and down the dusty road; the hill itself (where they live) is not more known, than the face of Miss Arnold; yet the man of fashion, who is to carry this prodigy off in his coach, does not appear; and thus kept on the edge of expectation, a continued series of disappointment, not seldom ruffles a temper, that would naturally be submissive, and unaspiring; if she had not the misfortune, to be in her own estimation, and that of her friends—a beauty.

You will my inestimable monitress, forgive me for beguiling my anxiety, by a description, which shews in a new light, the importance of those obligations, your care of the early progress of my education, lays on me: to your elegant accomplishments, your refined sense, and moral virtues, it is, that I owe the little all which is valuable in me; and it is to those I am indebted,
for

for the fortitude which supports me, in my present disagreeable situation. ³⁸¹

I have just four guineas in my purse; the longer Mr. Arnold defers his voyage, the larger will be my debt to him: he will land me in any port on the French coast; I wish to go to Bologne, because, if my ill stars do not shed their malignant influence over every act of my life; I shall find the good father Dominick there; that worthy friend of St. Clare, who was indeed her cashier, as well as friend, from my first remembrance; I have no doubt of his readiness to receive me into his protection, 'till I can throw myself at the feet of my dear lady Abbess—'tis however a tedious interval, 'till I set out on my long desired journey; and were the Mitards to discover me, I dread least the power of Lord Morden, united with their depravity and cunning should be successfully exerted, to detain me here, and perhaps even deprive me of the humble protection Mr. Arnold's roof now affords—Oh! madam, were every young woman who voluntarily abandons the protection of her real friends, to encounter the difficulties, and anxiety, to which I have been exposed; and were those to be publicly known, would it not have the happy effect, of rendering the tranquil home, dear to the daughters of innocence? how should I now support myself, were I not conscious that I had a plea to offer in vindication of my conduct, the pure in heart will not totally reject? was the guilt of disobedience added to the present distresses of my mind, I know I should sink under them.

I long, yet dread to see you; how shall I approach St. Clare, if she is displeased with her Agnes? how shall I bear to see her languid countenance,

tenance, clouded with vexation for me? how meet the benign eyes of Madame St. Lawrens, turned, for the first time, in anger on her, for whom she has done and felt so much? oh! spare the poor culprit! her whole life to come shall be devoted to penitent obedience: yes, Harley! even thy seducing image, shall be torn from the soul of Agnes, thou charming heretic! yet I will pray for thy conversion, I will venerate thy virtues, and never forget the emanations of goodness which graced thy every look; these are the oblations due to a soul like thine, and in these, my dear St. Lawrens, my beloved St. Clare will join their

AGNES.

L E T T E R III.

Agnes in continuation.

THE event I most dreaded is come to pass; that Lord Morden, indefatigable in wickedness, has discovered me, and I am breathless with terror, with astonishment; yes my dear respectable, venerable friends, your Agnes is actually in dread of being sent to a common prison, the vile Mitard! has sent me a demand from his attorney of fifty pounds—a mistake, occasioned by the vanity of the Arnolds, I have reason to think preserved me this day from an insult which is too complicated in horrors to be thought on; the night is now overcast, and I have to determine, only, whether I will tell Mr. Arnold my situation, or again by escaping from hence continue a migration to which I see no end: what will become of me? whose offences are thus visited on my devoted head? what have I done to deserve thus to be abandoned, to misery, and despair?

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold are out; I therefore will once more try to compose my agitated thoughts, by addressing them to you.

Betsy, the little inmate whom I mentioned in my last, generally sits in what they call Miss Arnold's apartment; it consists of a sitting room, and bed-chamber, and contains the books, music, and work belonging to her; and there is a large light closet shuts in at one end, where Betsy sleeps; the back of the house is by much the more pleasant,

pleasant, and there for obvious reasons, I mostly am; Miss Arnold as I before said, is always stationary at one, or other, of the front windows.

I remarked this morning, Miss was particularly fine; and that some significant looks, were exchanged between the father, and mother, with nods, winks, and allusions I did not understand, nor was I at all ambitious of being honored with their confidence: and therefore as soon as the breakfast equipage was removed, I left the room.

I was followed on tip-toe by Betsy, who beckoned me to her apartment, and there very seriously told me, *the Lord* was come at last—not to you, continued she (seeing me change colour) but to our beauty.

He has been loitering about, these three days, waiting an opportunity no doubt to throw himself at her feet—the soft soul rides by in his vis-a-vis, leaves it at the inn, and then comes to reconnoitre on foot; nay, perceiving perhaps some incredulity in my looks, it is an absolute fact—we cannot be mistaken—we have seen him ourselves—and the chandler shop woman where *we* deal having found out his quality from his own footman, came and told the whole affair to Madam Fussock: our fortunes are all made, and moreover when Miss Arnold is a countess, I shall be, an please you, her ladyship's humble companion.

This story, related with a humorous gravity, I know not why, affected me in a strange manner; I felt myself chilled, and burning alternately; I trembled, and turned so sick, I was obliged to open the window for air.

Heavens! cried the trisler, what are you about? do you know, that we are so tenacious of
our

our conquest; so afraid another pretty face besides our own should be visible; that Madam Fussock has given positive orders, no window shall be opened, nor any one, save our beauty, be seen at the front of the house? not but, I am determined to have a peep to-day let the lord take it as he will.

I still continued faint, and did not remove from the window.

Oh! very well, continued Betsy, I see you won't mind me, you want to rival Miss Arnold, and as I live, here comes the old lady.

As I had no idea, the orders so ludicrously repeated by the prating girl, had been really given; I continued at the window, but was soon made sensible of my error.

Miss Farquar, said Mrs. Arnold, out of breath with passion, I think I am mistress of this here house; and for to let you, for to know; I mean to remain so.

Who disputes your authority, madam, said I? with as much humility as I could assume.

You Miss, you do, how dare you presume for to open that there window, ven I ordered it to be kept shut? but I see what you would be at Miss, I see through your little harrefices, and sist on your immediately perviding yourself with another login; I'll not keep folks in my house, for to take the bread out of my child's mouth, I promise you.

Bless me, madam! answered I--I do not comprehend you.

Get yourself a login, Miss, you comprehend that I suppose.

Understand, my dear lady Abbess, that this woman's passion, and her voice were both raised

at

at every sentence she uttered; and the last was delivered with such an inflamed countenance, and loud tone of voice, that frightened at her violence, and dreading to what further lengths it might be carried, I burst into tears; and though my sickness, and faintness returned, was hastening out of the house, as fast as I could go.

Stay, Miss Farquar, cried the little generous Betty, stay for me; and then tying on her straw bonnet, good bye, dame Arnold, when your house is again honored by the residence of a gentlewoman, learn to treat her better.

Why pray, Miss Pert, answered Mrs. Arnold where are you going? nobody said nothing to you.

I advise you, Mrs. Arnold, answered she, in a haughty tone, not to insult *me*, you know I won't bear it—call me by my name if you please—I shall go with Miss Farquar—don't imagine I will be made a prisoner of, and be deprived of the fresh air, because your daughter has captivated a lord; God help you! I wish you knew them as well as I do, you would then know that one honest man is worth fifty lords, whose chief merit is their title; not but there are exceptions, and many too—this new idol of yours may be one for aught I know or care—but I assure you, neither a lord, nor all the titles in the world, shall give you authority to insult me.

Why child, did I affront *you*? replied Mrs. Arnold, in the usual mild key, to which the spirit of my little friend is sure to reduce her——

Yes you did—when you fly into your foolish, vulgar passions, with a young person, who I am sure is much your superior, and a gentlewoman, before my face, and in my apartment, it is an affront

affront to me—and I won't stay in your house a moment after she quits it.

Nay Betsey, you know I always respects a *gentlewoman*, because I am *one myself*.

So you ought, what signifies your telling me of your father, and uncles, and the rest of the 'squires of your family; if you discredit your birth, by ill treating a young lady, who is under the protection of your roof.

Well, Miss Farquar, you *may* stay, cried the vulgar woman, half proud at the hint of her gentility, and half humbled at the concessions, the generous girl had extorted from her.

O fye, Mrs. Arnold, is that the way you apologise for the excess, to which your passion transported you? Miss Farquar does not wish to stay, and I am sure will not; except you make a proper acknowledgment for the errors of your indecent passion.

I stood, during this conversation in silent wonder, at the influence the little pleader had over our turbulent hostess; whom she actually prevailed on to ask my pardon, and then civilly turned her out of the room, on pretence, that we were going to be very busy, in contriving a new head-dress for Miss Arnold.

Poor stupid, vulgar wretch, said she, shutting the door, I wish we had gone; I am tired of them I assure you.

My tears would flow, although I did all I could to repress them; the sweet girl kissed my cheek, and begged me to be comforted, till she caught the infection from me; but her spirits which are very strong, could not bear like me to vent her tears in silence; she was seized with violent hysterics, and continued very ill the whole morning:

ing: Mrs. Arnold and her daughter were both so sincerely concerned for, and so assiduous about her, that I most cordially forgave her passionate behaviour to me: they are certainly very fond of her, and it is hardly possible to be otherwise, she is very amiable; but to proceed in my unhappy story.

The post arrives twice each day with the letters from London; and Mr. Arnold's back gate being the one next the town, the man rings at that; it so happened the gate was open, and I was crossing a court which separates the house, from the garden, at the moment the post-man came, and read aloud the direction of a letter, *To Miss Louisa Fermer*, said he, is there such a lady here? I don't know what I answered, but in my fright took the letter, and ran with it to my chamber; it contained

Madam,

Mr. Mitard having directed me to demand from you the sum of fifty pounds, due from you, to him, for board and necessaries, I am to acquaint you, if the said sum is not immediately paid, I shall arrest you without further notice.

I am, your humble servant,

Thaves-Inn.

J. CAPUS.

Again the same sick and faint sensation, which had seized me before returned; and I was so indisposed, I was obliged to go into the garden, for air: I had not been out five minutes, before Betsy ran towards me, with every mark of terror in her countenance.

Oh dear Farquar! cried she, help me over this wall, let me make my escape any how, any where, I am undone! that wretch Lord Morden!

Lord

Lord Morden repeated I, sinking on the grass.

Oh lord! yes! he has found me out, for heavens sake, dear Farquar, how shall I get away?

Oh said I—I fear it is *me* he has found.

You—answered Betsy, why what business has he with you? does he want to marry you too?

Oh! no! no! would to God! I was an hundred leagues off.

Oh! so do I a thousand, but why are you so alarmed? if you are not in danger of being forced to marry Lord Morden, you are not half so unhappy as me! and the poor thing threw herself down by me on the grass-plot, and again we wept together.

We were in this situation, when Mrs. and Miss Arnold entered the garden.

Oh! cried Betsy, throwing her arms round me, they are coming to fetch me, but I won't go, I'll die first.

Rather, said I, their business is with me.

We were however both mistaken; they were in deep (and as it should seem by the mutual smiles, of mother and daughter) well-pleased discourse; so entirely indeed were they engaged by the subject of their conversation, that they passed on without seeing us, or suspecting any person was near, to a garden seat, which being shaded by jessamines, woodbines, and other creepers, hid them from our view: but interested as we were, you may believe we listened with great eagerness, and caution to their conversation.

For my part, said Mrs. Arnold, I think now, the sooner you sees him the better—delays are dangerous—many things happen between the cup and the lip—he has declared himself and
therefore

therefore I would have your papa come plump to the point.

Law! mamma, answered Miss, that would be vastly ridiculous; and besides I should like to be a little cruel at first, and pretend I didn't like to change my condition, and so you know he will be unhappy, and follow me to the assembly, and dear! how the Miss Keely's, and the Miss Tobyns, and the Miss Parkers will swell with envy, when Lord Morden's carriage is called.

I had here a violent pinch from Betsy.

Well my dear, sur be it from me to want to get rid of my Nancy—she shall do as she pleases; only as I said before delays are dangerous.

But then you know, mamma, if he opens his purposals to papa, he can't you know go back; or now I think of it, suppose we pretend papa did not know of it, and so make it a runaway match.

Fiddle-de-dee of a runaway match, no, no! I'll have every thing fair and above board: my lord spoke like a lord—madam, said he, there is a young lady under your ospital roof, and you will confer the greatest favor on me, if you will suffer me to speak six words to her.

Betsy, and I, sighed responsively—she continued—

My lord, says I—I shall be very happy you will honor my house so far as to walk in—val'nt that right? appealing to Miss.

Oh yes, certainly, vel—

Vel then, you see, he comed into the parlour, and I was so sorry the curtains and chairs were cased up, and the carpet kiver'd, but howsever my lord didn't mind that a bit—but says he, you bind me my dear ma'am, says he, ever to your

service by this condescension; I love this inexorable beauty, would make her mistress of my fortune—but she flies my ardent love.

There! said Betsy, I motioned to her to keep silence, Mrs. Arnold went on—

Slights my passion, and will not suffer me to breathe my vows at her feet—pity, amiable Mrs. Arnold, a despairing lover; and down my lord fell on his knees to me.

Law, said the delighted daughter, I wish I had been there. Vel—

Vel then, says I, my lord, says I, this here is a very serus business.

Only five minutes, let me have an opportunity to urge my passion five minutes and—

Indeed! interrupted Miss, he will be mistaken, I shall not consent in many five minutes, I assure him, five minutes!

Vel, continued the mother, so I told him as it was a thing of too serus a nature, to resolve on in a minute; but I would consult my husband, and if he consented, his lordship mought call to morrow morning, and we would talk to his lordship; and dear me, he was so thankful, and bowed so handsomely all the way he went out, and made so many apologies for troubling me, as I waited on him to his viz, a viz, vel after all there is nothing like a downright parson of quality.

Not if he is a lord, mamma, and away the happy pair walked, still harping on the lord, 'till they were out of hearing.

Now said Betsy, as soon as they were gone, I would give my little finger to be sure Miss Arnold is really the object of Lord Morden's pursuit, what think you Farquar?

I shook

I shook my head.

Do you know him? said she.

A little.

Don't you think him a shocking creature.

You know him I perceive.

Not a little, I was once in danger of being married to him, and if he were to get me into his odious power again, I fear I must rival our beauty whether I would or not.

My curiosity was now so raised about my amiable little friend, that I told her, I was ready to exchange confidence with her, which she eagerly agreed to—but added she, with a charming naïveté—I shall have such a vast deal to say, not that my story is long, but (sweetly blushing and casting down her eyes) it really requires so many apologies, and so much indulgence, that I dare not drop my mask, without a long prayer for mercy; and see those foolish things are returning, come to my room at bed time, and I will tell you all by moonlight, when you can't see me blush.

Mrs. and Miss Arnold then came up, so brisk and debonair, that all my apprehensions for myself vanished for the present—but to-morrow: oh! what may not happen to-morrow: I hear the family who have been walking in the park return; Betty's history may perhaps determine me, and fix the waverings of my mind, which are wholly the result of cowardice; I tremble at the dangers I have past, and my heart recoils when I reflect, it is possible they may not be equal, to what may yet be fated for you

AGNES.

A man belonging to Mr. Arnold is going to London, I therefore send off this letter—God grant it may meet you at Paris.

L E T T E R IV.

Edward Harley, Esq; to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

THE mortal part of your Harley is returned to his native country; harrassed with grief, fatigue, and disappointment, the soul-less fugitive again addresses his partial, his ever dear Butler, and dearer Caroline: he asks consolation from their friendship, and indulgence from their affection.

Whither, dear object of my adoration, art thou flown? return, return to thy distracted Harley.

Oh Caroline! will her benign, undefiled soul, ever bend in pity, and pardon to the wretch who durst insult her purity, with the repetition of a calumny; founded on the ever obstinate error of jealousy, and supported by prejudice? alas! I dare not hope it.

The confusion of guilt I have told you was not on her—yet she fled—threw herself (that dear enchanting form, where the soul of beauty is seen, not in a particular feature, not in the tincture of the skin, the glance of the eye, or turn of countenance; but in an harmonized combination of all that is lovely in woman) alone, on a world where she is literally a stranger.

Oh! Caroline, you who possess the best of human hearts, let the story of the injured Agnes warn you, never to give up the cause of your
sex,

sex, the hope of virtue, and the reputation of innocence, 'till you are sure, 'till your own eyes, your ears, your senses, not the tongue of the malevolent, convince you they no longer exist: and even then, let the value of the gem *you* possess, teach you to commiserate, the irreparable misfortune of a sister mortal who has *lost* it.

Oh! Agnes, where now is the power of that sympathy, which I fondly said, would lead me to thee wherever thou wert? lost, sunk in the chaos of despair, into which thy absence plunges me.

I am returned to my Hermitage, but my mind refuses to acknowledge its accustomed retreats; it recognizes no spot in my grove, but that where the form of Agnes, once seen is for ever remembered. Disgusted with my loved home, my humble friends, and most of all with myself; I fly, with eager avidity, to the bosom of friendship; and while I record my sufferings, and blasted hopes, fancy I hear the rational voice of consolation from my friend, and feel the genial drops of pity which flow from the eyes of Caroline: yes, my sister! indulge the laudable weakness; you will not only weep for Harley, the gentle, the injured Agnes, will also share your pity.

Filled with hopes, which the extravagance of my enraptured fancy, had anticipated, and realized, I left home the moment I had sealed my letter to you.

I travelled post, changing horses oftener than it was either needful, or customary, stopping only to make enquiries at the different stages, for the angel I was pursuing. The first fifty miles towards Dover, I could hear no kind of tidings

of her, and the ardor of my hopes consequently a little abated: at G—— it was my misfortune to hear, that a lady, young, handsome and alone, had taken the route to Calais; I followed and traced her from inn, to inn, till she embarked on board a packet, which had sailed from Dover twelve hours before I arrived; not doubting but this was my Agnes, I procured a boat, notwithstanding the wind was very tempestuous, which conveyed me across the channel; where, as I thought I should find myself awkward in the enquiries I had to make, I engaged a young fellow to attend me in quality of a linguist, who spoke English, and in every respect answered a good character I received of him from the master of the hotel, where I stopped at Calais: from whence again I traced the lady I had followed from G——; she took her route through Lisle, and at last (happily as I then thought) I lodged her at the hotel de ——, where to my extreme joy she yet remained: I found her apartment, and without announcing myself rushed in, and throwing myself at her feet, found it was——*not Agnes.*

The lady was surprised, but not offended.

Heavens! exclaimed I, am I deceived; is it you, madam, I have followed? and is not Miss de Courci here?

I have not the honor to know Miss de Courci, sir, answered she, in broken English.

Did you come from England, is it you I have traced from G——?

Certainly sir I have travelled that road.

Good God! said I, starting up, and motioning to leave the room—how I have been mistaken.

I, at

I, at least am not to blame, said the lady with great good-nature, and you will allow some apology due, for intruding so unexpectedly into a lady's apartment. I acknowledged the justice of her reproof, and accepted her invitation to supper.

I found her a lively agreeable little woman, whose husband, a French negociator, from Dijon, had left her in England, on a visit with some of his correspondents, and whom she expected to meet her at Paris, where he arrived while we were at supper; and the gay creature made him and herself very merry at my disappointment.

The next morning I presented myself at the convent D——, and enquired for Madame St. Lawrens; I was informed she was gone to Abbeville to visit a dying religieuse, for whom she had a particular friendship.

I then asked, if a lady, Miss de Courci, had not arrived at the convent from England?

Miss de Courci, replied the lay sister, who answered my enquiries, is she returning here? shall we again see that angelic creature? oh! without doubt she comes to console our superior, who will greatly need it when her friend is called to the holy virgin; when sir, may we expect her?

I thought to have found her here, said I, (sighing).

Perhaps she is gone to Abbeville, answered the nun; she was as much beloved by St. Clare, as by Madame St. Lawrens, and now I recollect, there was a talk of sending for her to accompany the lady Abbess.

This was the intelligence I wanted, La Sor-tine procured the passports, and we began our journey to Abbeville, the next day, which we

purfued with the fame rapidity with which we reached Paris.

The order of the convent at Abbeville is very fevere, it almoft equals the famous one of La Trappe.

The fiftershood, chiefly confifting of ftrict penitents, whose whole time, with the very little portion allowed for reft, is devoted to acts of fevere penance.

The abbefs St. Lawrens is a woman of high birth, and noble extraction; the order of which fhe is fuperior, is compofed chiefly of women of family. Their rules are fimple but not ftrict. The abbefs's countenance is very impreffing, the brilliancy of her fine black eyes, and brows, chaftened by the humility of her deportment, are charmingly contrafted by her habit, which is white, with a long black veil; fhe has a custom of walking, and converfing, with her hands folded, which are white as her linen, and beautifully formed; this attitude you would think could not be graceful, but Madame St. Lawrens is grace itfelf in every fenfe.

My enquiries for Mifs de Courci, foon gained me admittance to the parlour, where Madame St. Lawrens received me—fhe anxiously asked my reafon for fuppoing Mifs de Courci was there.

I mentioned Madame de Vallmont's conjecture.

How fir, faid fhe, in very tolerable Englifh, what is this you tell me? has my Agnes, my child left the houfe of General Moncrafts? what can have happened? has he given her up? does he no longer protect her? has he fo foon forgot the engagement of his word? is he regardless of the ties of blood? is the violated honor of his family

no

no more dear to him?—happy St. Clare! you are out of the reach of this fresh misfortune, the few moments you have yet to breathe, shall not be rendered miserable by these fatal tidings:—no! (melting into tears) this is an event shall only be known to thy friend: where is my child? beloved creature, she knows how welcome to the bosom of St. Lawrens she will ever be—speak fir—why do you hesitate? have you more unpleasing news to tell me? know fir, you have little need of precaution—the friend, the sister of my heart, is now breathing her last—I have fortitude to bear a separation from her without repining (yet still she wept) and cannot want resolution to support me under any other event, except indeed—Agnes is no more—except her gentle spirit has been called to join the rejoicing angels, appointed to bear my beloved St. Clare to the bosom of her God.

This lady's manner and words, the tears, which notwithstanding her avowed fortitude gushed in torrents from her eyes, the stillness of the convent, where no voice but hers, nor footstep was heard; all contributed to inspire me with a solemn awe I never felt before: she continued to demand with the most anxious solicitude, an account of her dear Agnes, while (conscious that my belief of the gross report, I now knew must be false, was the occasion of the rash step the dear angel had taken, which was so lamented by her respectable friend, who would not—who could not have been satisfied with her situation at Belle-Vue, had she not been certain it was consistent with virtue) I stood before Madame St. Lawrens, as much abashed as the original founder of the calumny could have been:—at length, however,

my confusion gave way to the entreaties of the lady Abbess—I fell at her feet—and there—almost suffocated with grief and regret, made a full confession of all that had passed between Agnes and me; avowed my adoration of the dear wanderer, and in vindication of myself, acquainted her with the General's separation from his lady, and the universally credited report of his keeping Agnes as a mistress.

It is in vain my dear Butler, for me to attempt to describe to you, the astonishment and anger, depicted in Madame St. Lawren's countenance.

What a country is your's, sir? said she, as soon as she could articulate, what people have you in it! what contracted, what narrow souls must those be, who cannot allow a virtuous attachment may subsist between the different sexes; how industrious to promote the horrid purpose of slander! how destitute of urbanity is the being who could look in the face of Agnes de Courci, and not read there the modest purity of her mind! but you say (added she with quickness) she is returning to me—sweet child! how commendable is thy resolution! go, sir, teach your countrymen, and learn yourself, to judge charitably and live righteously! and with these words the inexorable woman left me.

It was to no purpose I implored her to grant me a second interview, I actually besieged her with letters, but could not obtain a single line in answer; yet I continued hovering about the convent, in hopes Agnes would, as Madame de Vallmont had predicted, follow Madame St. Lawrens to Abbeville.

At the end of eight days the convent bell announced the death of one of the nuns—it was
St.

St. Clare, the friend of the lady Abbess; I attended among others the funeral oration delivered by the bishop over the deceased nun, and heard an eulogy on her which drew tears from every eye.

The bishop had, he said, married when in the bloom of youth, *her* whom he was now about to bury; and except the one grand false step of her life, which he had not been made acquainted with 'till the last stage of her sickness, he believed he might say she lived without sin; her penitence (he continued) for the secret one she had committed before I first knew her, was to the last moment of her existence exemplary; in this holy sisterhood, said the venerable man, I will not particularize a sin, which was beyond all earthly atonement, they know the penitence, the piety, the resignation of St. Clare; but they know not the enormity of that offence which torrents of tears could not expiate; they saw her with all the elegance of form, and grace of manners, which rendered her the object of admiration, wherever she appeared, resign the world, and all its temptations: they beheld the eagerness with which she sought a re-union with her God—they saw her tender frame, unable to encounter the strict rules of this pious society, drop into dust ere yet her days were nearly numbered; but her firm mind they also beheld, strong in faith, and in the midst of tears and repentance, sometimes illumined with *hope*; 'till at length, the voice of mercy reach'd her departing spirit, and we all witnessed the peace of her last moments.

I made La Sortine translate thus much of this funeral discourse, to give you some idea of the prelate who uttered it, as well as the character of the

the friend of *Agnes* ; the former is a man who honors religion ; he lives in his diocese with the universal love and respect of his flock, charity, patience, and forbearance, are the leading traits in his disposition ; he is an Italian by birth, and had in another country given the nuptial benediction to St. Clare, he has rose with an unimpeached character through the several gradations of ecclesiastical promotion, to the dignity he now enjoys, and has been ten years prelate at Abbeville.

St. Clare was also a foreigner, she came to Abbeville unknown, and unattended, paid her pension as a lay sister, and immediately discarding all worldly cares, cloathed herself in the strict habit of the order, and went through all the rigorous discipline of the house, with a strength of mind and resolution ill adapted to the delicacy of her form, which by degrees became a sacrifice, to her penitence, and devotion.

The good bishop, influenced by the piety of her character, often visited the declining nun, and administered the consolation he thought due to the sanctity of her character: but it was not till after the arrival of Madame St. Lawrens, when the extreme unction, which *she* partook with her friend, was about to be administered, that she added some particulars to her former confessions, which recalled to the good prelate's memory, the beautiful creature, he had given to an English gentleman at Ancona, twenty years before : from this period, 'till the moment of her dissolution, which contrary to expectation was many hours ; he did not leave the bedside of the dying St. Clare, but with Madame St. Lawrens, passed the solemn interval in comforting and
praying

praying by the expiring saint. St. Clare, my Caroline, was *one of the women, who formed the mind of Agnes de Courci.*

I did not attempt to interrupt the sacred sorrow to which Madame St. Lawrens now abandoned herself; but followed her after the last mass had been said for her departed friend, to Paris, where I presented myself at the grate the next morning to enquire after her health.

I was, to my infinite joy, immediately admitted.

I found the lady Abbess seated at her secretary, with several large parcels of letters before her, her eyes still swollen with weeping.

Ah! child, said she, as soon as I entered, I am in the utmost distress; here are letters from my poor Agnes, which I ought to have received long since; and heaven knows to what perils she may be exposed by the want of my assistance: I am writing to General Moncras, if the story you have told me is true, with respect to his illness; for I find all the rest confirmed by my dear child, you will do well to hasten to him: all mystery is now, on our parts at an end; he will probably immediately clear the fame of Agnes, and place her in a situation, suitable to her natural right.

I did not neglect so favourable an opportunity of endeavouring to interest this holy woman in my behalf; I know not what I said, but her answer almost annihilated me.

Miss de Courci will assuredly obey the General, and advise with *me*, before she disposes of her hand; we will hear *your* proposals, Agnes is one of the greatest heiresses your country can boast.

I cannot

I cannot describe the effect this declaration had on me; all the moisture in my body seemed in an instant dried up; a burning heat and disagreeable taste filled my throat, my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, my eyes flashed fire, my legs trembled, and I sunk down in a torpid yet not insensible state; and continued immovable, 'till some ounces of blood had been taken from me.

The lady Abbess looked at me, I thought, with compassion, — go, said she, yours is a poor nervous system, I pity you! If you are at all interested in the fate of Agnes, you must make haste to England — heaven knows in what hands she may be, had her own wish been gratified, she would have reached this house before my return from Abbeville. — Oh! my poor child! destitute of money, friends, and protectors, what may not at this moment be her fate?

That Caroline was exactly her situation, when she concluded her last letter to Madame St. Laurens. I engaged to return to Belle-Vue with the utmost expedition, and deliver her letters; where I arrived yesterday.

The General is still confined, and the dispatches I brought, will not I fear, contribute to his recovery; he apologised for not seeing me last night, but wished I would oblige him with my company this morning; an express was sent off by his favorite servant, Gallini, while I was with Madame de Vallmont, in pursuit, I doubt not, of Miss de Courci.

Ah! Caroline — the greatest heiress in England! — well, and what is there in that — let her be happy — let her be found, and peace restored

to

to her soft bosom, and then, of what import will be the fate of

EDWARD HARLEY.

Since I concluded my letter a thought has struck me, which could I put in execution, might at least give me an opportunity of imploring her pity—I dare not hope for more nor do I now desire it—she is an heiress, a *great heiress*, these were the Abbess's words, and I still poor Edward Harley, with nothing more to offer her than love and a bare sufficiency—but sister, do you not foresee, “*all mysteries at an end*,” that General Moncras may forbid Miss de Courci's hearing the sad complaint of the hapless Harley? he has sent to London express, she is certainly there—what therefore have I to do at the Hermitage?—what at Belle-Vue—yes—I will follow his express. I shall perhaps be with you before this letter.

Oh my restless—my agonized heart!

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

*Major Melrose to General Moncrâfs.**London.*

TWO odd things have happened to me, during my pursuit of your fugitive; I have in the first place been very near beating my last march, and I have recovered one of the truants of your family; Julia Neville is at this moment peeping over my shoulder: but to be methodical——sauntering home from St. James's-place, my old acquaintance, Dighen the jeweller, accosted me, with his usual good-nature, and invited me to look at some fine diamonds, he was employed to reset for the duchess of——

I hate that woman for her folly, said I, in spite of her pretty face; she has spent more money in altering her old jewels, than would have purchased a new set in addition to them; what say you, Dighen?

Not that I hate her grace for that, replied he, but to own the truth, I know nothing more fluctuating than the fashion of diamonds.

Except, interrupted I, their possessors.

True, Major, said honest Dighen, and as a proof in point, I will shew you the most beautiful pair of bracelets I ever made, which I sold to your friend, General Moncrâfs, not three months ago; they were presented by him to a young
French

French favorite, who I find has left him; and yesterday she sold them to me.

How! cried I, eagerly, was it Agnes? did she sell you the jewels? are you certain?

I understand so, replied Dighton, she has been described to me, as very handsome, a French woman, and intriguer of course; she had a young fellow with her with whom I understood, from what little I know of the French language, she was going to the continent; they spoke of a Dunkirk trader, in which they meant to take their passage, which they expected to sail this morning.

Dunkirk! and a young fellow! upon my soul, General, you have infinite obligations to me on the score of fellow-feeling; had a girl of my own served *me* so, I could not have been more enraged:—I just took a cursory view of the bracelets, enough however to satisfy me, they were the identical ones you presented your protégée, and then posted down to Wapping; where I met one of my emissaries, who had been to my house to inform me, that a Dunkirk trader had actually sailed, and that a female passenger had been taken on board off Rotherhithe.

The rage this intelligence threw me into, was observed by an old weatherbeaten son of Neptune, who begged my honor to moderate my passion, for that he would engage to overtake the trader before midnight——Come along, then, old boy, said I, putting a guinea into his hand.

Ah General! what is there besides a woman's heart, which gold cannot buy? and I firmly believe the dear things will rather throw them away, than sell them; as to their *persons*—that is—une autre chose.

Old

Old Charon was presently ready with a strong boat, and three other stout fellows, all in high glee, in hope of my further bounty.

Just as I was stepping into the boat, a fine genteel young fellow, pale, and out of breath; came running to the stairs on the very errand which had brought me there; the Dunkirk trader was his object as well as mine, and he would give any money to overtake her.

My fellows looked wistfully at me, and at the seat of the boat, which would conveniently hold two; I very well knew if I gave the rascals twenty guineas, they would hanker after the one they missed; and moreover, in such a tedious passage as I should have, I considered a rational being to chat with would not impede my expedition, but perhaps encourage the fellows to get on the faster; so, after I had seated myself, I gave the old fellow leave to drive his own bargain with the stranger, who presently was seated also by my side.

As we proceeded, I began to entertain strong doubts of the sanity of my fellow traveller; I attempted to draw him into conversation on various subjects, but his answers, when he did answer, were sometimes so incoherent, and at others so dejected, that I gave the matter up, and buttoning my furtout, amused myself with singing a few jolly camp songs, which highly entertained the fellows: my companion had his amusements too; he was constantly either reproaching the men for their tardiness, or urging them to be expeditious—mountains he would give if they overtook the trader; was not that her? pointing to a vessel before us—no—nor that? no—nor that? stretching himself forward, so that it was
with

with great difficulty we prevented his falling over the side of the boat.

Come, pull away my lads, said I, the night grows cold, d—n the ship, I wish she was at the bottom of the sea with all my soul.

The madman as I actually thought him, shuddered, for heaven's sake, sir, said he, eyeing me with curiosity, what may be the object of your pursuit, in the ship your wishes devote to such a deplorable fate?

This was the first reasonable question he asked, and I immediately answered with little hesitation, and less good manners (you will say it, General, if I do not) in an elevated tone of voice—A woman.

He started so as again to endanger a fall over the boat side.

The lady is obliged to you, sir, said he, casting a look at me expressive of resentment; a silence ensued, I resumed my song, and he gave himself up to the contemplation of the stars and the music of his own sighs.

And pray, sir, resumed I, as I have satisfied you in respect to *my* motive for taking this agreeable voyage, with so pleasant a companion; may I presume to ask in *my* turn, what is the magnet which draws *you* with such violence after this same trader?

A woman! answered he, imitating my tone and manner, so unexpectedly, that I was as much startled as he had been, I was however not displeased at his spirit.

The devil you are, said I, why I am informed there is but one female on board the ship; if therefore we should both be on the same scent, I should like to know in what manner this adventure is to terminate?

Just

Just in what manner you please sir, replied he, very calmly; we now got into a kind of cross purpose acquaintance, which suited him much better than the sort of conversation I had endeavoured to draw him into, and accordingly we got on with some spirit, till one of the fellows called to the rest.

There—that is the Dunkirk trader, where? where?—aye, that's she, sure enough, said old Charon, we were now on the tip-toe of expectation, my companion unable from agitation to speak, and myself conning over a wonderful gallant speech which I intended should be my introductory one to Mademoiselle Agnes.

We were soon long side of the vessel, and my young spark was up in a moment, but, I, who you know have a certain alacrity to sinking, and cannot climb like a cat, was obliged to ascend more cautiously: I had, however, the satisfaction to find he had not proceeded a jot the faster for his nimble ascent, as he was yet in high parley with the captain, requiring the sight of a lady; which said lady, the captain manfully swore was not in his ship.

Come, noble captain, said I—I will bet you those ten guineas, the lady you will *shew me*, is not her, this gentleman is describing; and you shall hold stakes.

The man civilly received the money, took off his hat, and led the way to the cabin. The lady, gentlemen, said he aloud, as he entered, is retired to rest, and must not be disturbed.

My companion hung back, I haled him forward, why sure, man, cried I, thou art not afraid of a woman in her night dress; he still held back, so on I proceeded.

The

The captain pointed to the cabin, where he whispered, Monsieur and Madame were on bed.

Monsieur and Madame I repeated—

Ah! cried my young gentleman, *then advancing*, that cannot be the lady I expected to see; have you no other on board?

The captain swore he had not.

I cannot tell how to think, said I, that the lady I expected to see, would be exactly circumstanced as the captain has represented: but however, for demonstration; and I rapped with my knuckles against the slider.

Condescend fair creature, just to show us the tip of your aquiline nose, and who should pop out her pretty French face, but that little queen of capers, Mitard.

Sacré dieu! Major, I am charmed to see you, what be you going to Dunkirk?

To Dunkirk, no, God forbid! but pray Madame where in the name of all that's beautiful, are you going?

Oh! I am going to mine own contre, your Englis contre do not agree wid me, I am all over indispose.

And where is Monsieur, is he all over indispose too?

Ah barbare! he use me very ill, I am separate from him, I am going to divorce.

You do very right, a woman of *your spirit*.

Ah our Major, I learn de spirit from your charmante Englis ladies.

Bravo! but who have you with you?

Ah! monchere Major, said the bold thing, shewing her white teeth, and looking through her long black eye lashes, why ask question a lady cannot answer?

I instantly

I instantly dropped the curtain, and was leaving Madame to her violent resentment against her barbarous spouse, when I recollected the bracelets; and turning to my companion, who had resumed his amusement of star-gazing, and sighing; told him I had a strange fancy, that little Mitard's gallant was of her own sex; I then desired the captain to acquaint her with my suspicions, and to let her know, I must have some more conversation with her—I cannot think, added I, again addressing the young man, not immediately having in mind that he was a stranger to my affairs, how she could come by the bracelets, if Agnes is not with her.

He actually shrieked, Agnes sir, Agnes did you say? is it then Miss de Courci you seek? and are we indeed in search of the same object? and have I the honor to address Major Melrose?

All this, replied I, is very possible, nay it is more, it is true—but my recollection is not quite so ready as yours, I have no knowledge of *you*; in short, General, I found myself, I neither knew how, or why, out of humour; you say the girl is nothing to you, at least as an object of the belle passion; yet for the soul of me I could not look with patience on such a fine young fellow, who pretended to be so much interested in the fate of your protegee.

My name, sir, said he, bowing respectfully enough, without an atom of servility, is Harley; I was, I have reason to fear, sir, the cause of Miss de Courci's leaving Belle-Vue: my anxiety on her account is unspeakable, I have been in France in hope of hearing of her, and was just returned from thence, when I heard by accident, that a young lady who answered her description,

description, had given the captain of this vessel five guineas, to sail a tide sooner than he intended; I followed, you see the event; my heart is inured to disappointment, but this—this last is too keen.

I cannot help it General, it is natural to me to feel my spleen rise at these sort of young fellows, when a girl is in the case; there is a certain something about them, inimical to the interest of us middle aged gents, which always raises my ire.

And pray, young gentleman, said I, a little sarcastically, what may be your *very* urgent business with Miss de Courci, supposing you had *not* felt the keenness of this disappointment.

I am disposed, answered he, gravely, to pay every regard to Major Melrose, which is due to his rank, and character; but I will not abate any thing of what is also due to my own; you sir, have no right to put that question to me; and much less, when it is accompanied with a look, and manner, as unbecoming in you to offer, as it would be mean in me not to notice; my business with Miss de Courci shall be told only to *herself*: and how displeasing soever to Major Melrose it may be, I will not rest 'till I have an opportunity of seeing her.

Now although I could not but approve of the young dog's spirit, and although I was conscious that my petulance, was on his part wholly unprovoked, yet you know, to feel you are wrong, and to admit it to a man, is out of the soldier's creed; I look on you young man, I replied, as my guest, the law therefore of hospitality, settles this altercation for the present; we shall elsewhere converse more freely on the subject.

When

When and where you please, sir, was his answer. A message from Madame Mitard, now informed me, she was waiting my commands.

I found her seated in the cabin, with young Gabriel the dancer by her side.

Monseigneur, with a good deal of humour in his manner, asked if I was satisfied as to his sex, and Madame trying to blush, begged to know my further business with her.

I told her I was sorry, and faith so I was, to have interrupted such an agreeable party; but I had a word or two for her private ear.

Oh! pardon me, Major, said the confident thing, casting an amorous glance at her gallant, I have nothing private from Monsieur Gabriel.

Very well, madam, then I beg to know, how you came in possession of the bracelets you sold to Dighen, the jeweller, yesterday.

Mon dieu! cried she, what be they stole? ah, I thought Louisa was fly, but I never thought she was teif—no.

Whom do you mean? interrupted I, sternly, how came you by the bracelets?

Oh! Major, rejoined she, in a fawning tone, don't put yourself in a passion, I can tell you very well; Monsieur Mitard pick up a very pretty young woman at N——, when we come from Lord Squander's fete, we keep her two, tree months, and she give us the bracelet for her bord.

Ah! where is she now? cried Harley, this must be Miss de Courci.

Madame shrugg'd her shoulders, I know nothing, she leave us with Lord Morden, we never see her after.

This cannot be Agnes, said I, ironically.

No,

No sir, answered he fiercely, it cannot, you I fancy are not acquainted with that lady.

Oh! joined Mitard, the lady I mean was Louisa Fernier: we were now interrupted by the captain, who informed us his vessel was all this while under sail with a fine breeze, and that the boatmen begged if so be as we chose to proceed to Dunkirk, we would please to discharge them.

On this information we took a hasty leave of Mitard, who, I dare say, was rejoiced at our departure; and returned to our station in the boat, without interchanging a word with each other: Harley could not want amusement, he had the stars, and the harmony of his own sighs: but as for me, the cold night air, and falling damps, rendered my situation very uncomfortable; and I resolved within myself as we approached Greenwich, that I would knock up Tom Hotham, who being a bachelor, I could disturb without risk, and take a bed at his house; while I was making this arrangement Harley started up, and said there was a fire that instant burst out in the house on the hill before us.

Forgetting I was a few years older than him, and not having then in my mind my aforesaid alacrity for sinking; I must needs attempt to get up in equal haste, but missing the center of gravity, was in a moment plunged into the most disagreeable cold bath I ever was in in my life.

The moon (to be poetical) had now withdrawn her silver beams: the flames of the fire increased amazingly, and cast such a glare on the water, that although as they were rowing against the tide, we were carried contrary wise, I could distinctly see the boat; though they had lost all sight of me; the men indeed were not instantly

aware of the accident, and had pulled two or three strokes, before they knew it.

I saw the consternation they were in, but though some score years ago I could swim, I had now neither strength or skill to support myself against the tide; I gave myself up for a lost man, and as I could not call out, made some kind of hollow noise, which I thought would be the last salutation I should give this dear wicked world—Harley heard me, and, noble, generous fellow, threw his coat off, and plunging into the river, swam towards me, in the moment when my senses failed, and I was sinking never to rise; he grasped hold of my collar, and upheld me by main strength, 'till the watermen guided by him took us both in—for my own part, I had swallowed per force a quantum sufficient to drown some half score of your wish wash fellows, and was myself totally insensible, for many minutes after I was carried on shore.

The first thing I saw on opening my eyes, was the poor fellow I had been so pre-determinedly angry with, still without his coat in his wet linen, assisting an apothecary of the neighbourhood in my recovery: what I said to *him*, I do not remember; but this I know, that I played the woman with my eyes; I am cursed angry with the fellow, he would not be a soldier, but nevertheless, Ned Harley shall be my heir: I insisted on his changing his wet cloaths for some the landlord furnished him with, but when I was laid snug, and dry on a good bed, instead of complying with my desire, out sallied my knight errant in quest of more adventures to the fire, and in less than half an hour, rushes into my room with a lifeless female in his arms.

What

What the plague, Harley, have you been diving again?

No sir, I received this precious burthen from the air—the landlady and a maid-servant were summoned, who chafed her temples, and applied the usual volatiles, and conceive my astonishment, when the two sparkling blue eyes of Julia Nevill open'd in a direct stare in my face.

Oh! my dear Major, cried the little bold huffey, running to my bed-side, what providence brought you and Mr. Harley to Greenwich, just in the very minute to save the life of your little friend?

I was dumb with amazement, and Julia half frantic with joy, went on—

I thought it was all over with me, there was old Arnold, raving and fidgetting about his Nancy, his beautiful Nancy, and Madam Fussock, his wife, screaming out to save her boys, and her china, and begging, and praying her best glasses might be taken care of; the maids all busy preserving of their own trumpery, the stair case which led to my room burnt down before the noise awakened me, when I clung to the window screaming with terror; and oh! I thought then on my own dear mamma, if she had known my situation at that moment, how would her dear maternal heart, have ached, for her child; but there I stood, an example to all such whimsical girls, the grand daughter of an earl, an heiress, and the Lord knows what beside, and no soul to pity me; it was in vain that I begged for help, that I rent the air with my cries, all the rabble of the place were too busy about their friends the Arnold's to mind me; I knew Harley the moment I saw him, and actually believed he was

an angel sent from heaven to my relief, I surprised him enough I believe, when I called on him to save me, to save Julia Neville, he ran for a ladder, and seemed to fly with me out of the window like a bird, and I was so overjoyed to find you were here, and altogether, that I lost my senses.

Aye child, said I, you lost those when you left your mother ; but how the plague came you acquainted in such a place as this ?

Why Major, answered the pretty pleader, I may as well tell you the truth, for you will know it ; I was so tired of our moping family, so sick of that creature Lord Morden, and so longed to see Reuben : that I—I— in short I wrote to him, to come and carry me off ; but I was well paid for my folly ; instead of being ready to jump out of his skin for joy, if you will believe me, he wrote me a long stupid letter about honor, and gratitude due to Lady Mary ; which so enraged *me*, that I was then resolved to run away, if it were only to teize *him*, and I got, but you must not ask by what means, to board in the house (which is now burned) for a trifle, beside teaching the beauty, their daughter, to thrum an old spinnet and make fillagree ; to be sure, if it had not been for thinking on Reuben's refusing me, and mamma's vexation, I should have led a fine laughable life there, I assure you I governed the whole family.

Oh ! no doubt, replied I, but I hope, madam, you will in future learn to govern yourself.

That I never shall, returned Julia, so Major you will act your usual friendly part, in advising mamma to give me a master ; but, oh, heaven !
where

where is Harley? there is the sweetest girl who I have not seen, where is Harléy?

Gone to the fire again, answered the maid.

Good God! she exclaimed, Miss Farquar is certainly burnt, what a selfish creature was I not to think of her before, run, no, I will go myself; and she kept her word, I could not prevail on her to let the servant make enquiries after the person, about whom she was so anxious, but I directed a man and woman to follow her.

She returned so grieved, and shocked, that I insisted on her retiring to a chamber which I had ordered to be prepared for her—the poor young woman is missing, my God, General! I tremble to think how near Lady Mary was to become childless.

I could not sleep, but was obliged to remain in bed on account of a medicine I had taken, as morning approached this restraint became very painful to me, for notwithstanding I sent out every half hour, I could hear no tidings of Harley: about six I got up, and went to the place where the house had stood, which was now burnt to the ground: the sufferers were taken in by some of the neighbours, and only a few firemen and watermen about, I was shocked to hear the young woman's death confirmed, and no less shocked, than astonished at not hearing of Harley, I am half-distracted, I have not to this hour been able to learn one syllable concerning him; not a house in the town, or its environs, but what I searched, and this detained me at Greenwich till noon.

I could not prevail on Julia to return to her mother; I have therefore now left her under the

protection of the dowager Mrs. Butler, 'till she can make her terms with Lady Mary.

We remain in the utmost consternation about Harley, what can be become of him? Mr. Butler thinks he has by some unexpected means, or other, heard something of Agnes; nothing else, he says, would induce him to act so unaccountably; but he adds, if that be the case, we must not be surprised if we hear of him when and where we have least reason to expect it; I am willing to adopt Mr. Butler's opinion, because I think were it otherwise, if he is alive we should hear either of, or from him.

I have not yet been at St. James's-place, Mrs. Butler, (whom I sent to for that purpose) came down in her carriage to Greenwich, to fetch Julia, since which time I have been entirely taken up in searching after Harley, and writing to you.

I congratulate you, General, on your boy's conduct; "very hard," says little Julia, "he should refuse me, because I have a great fortune, when so many girls are run away with for no other reason in the world."

Julia has a *mind*, notwithstanding her volatility, she weeps incessantly for her companion, who perished in the flames. I gave you her little history exactly in her own words, because you should be sensible of the honor of your boy.

God bless you, my dear General, I am almost as eager to hear of Harley, as you are to recover Agnes.

MELROSE.

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

*General Moncrafts to Major Melrose.**Belle Vue.**My dear Major,*

THE period is at length arrived, you so ardently wished for; the riddle-me-ree, so grievous to your open heart, is in part expounded; the inclosed letter from Madame St. Lawrens, whom you knew at Lisbon, before she was professed; and those of Agnes de Courci to her, will convince you of the laudability of my conduct to the latter, and be in part, a solution of the enigmas, which have involved us all in such distress: and there is yet another discovery, a cursed one, which will come in thunder to the heart of Lady Mary: but her good sense, and native dignity of mind, will support her under it, when she is convinced of the honor, and faith of her Moncrafts; and believe me, Major, I did not feel more real rapture, at the first fond hope of possessing my beloved Mary, than I now do, as events gradually open a mystery I could not before explain.

I am still an invalid, or should have now been with you; therefore entreat you will go to the scoundrel Mitard, and take Agnes immediately under your protection; Mrs. Vallmont will join

you in three days after you receive this, to conduct her to me—should Mitard presume to prevaricate about her, threaten him, put him to death.

Agnes de Courci, the daughter of Agnes! the niece of Reuben Moncrafts! insulted by an opera singer!

Oh! Major, does not the christian name of this dear girl, bring to your recollection, the amiable creature you saw quit the world twenty-five years ago at Lisbon? whom family misfortunes obliged to take the veil, in all the pride of bloom and beauty? her whose abjuration of the world left such indelible regret on your mind? whose image you have sworn, rendered you invulnerable to a serious passion for any other woman? how often have you sighed forth the name of Agnes, yet could not penetrate the veil which fate had cast over her child? yes, Melrose! long did I mourn the fair apostate to our holy church, long resent the wounded fame of my family; but longer still did I lament my lost, my only sister; and the affections of a brother, a twin brother, are far more durable than the religious anger of a catholic: oh! beloved sister! when I received her from the warm heart of my honored father, her face wet with the maternal tears of her virtuous mother, did I not promise to be to her every fond relative from whom she was then parting? blessed shades of my revered parents! if ye are permitted to hover over your son, if in the mansions of bliss ye recognize the spirit of your now happy daughter, you know it was her *own* disastrous fate, not my neglect, not any omission of mine, which so fatally severed the sacred trust from a brother's protecting love—her story, Major,

jor, is a dreadful one, it will draw tears of blood from your heart; the moment the sad tale penned by herself arrives, you shall see it: but oh! she is no more! her pure spirit is now before the throne of him, *she only* had offended. Melrose drop a tear to the memory of the most wronged of women, and grieve with me, that her injuries were known, too late, for redress, or revenge; but “vengeance is mine, saith the Lord;” why then rises this swelling rage in my soul? why do my hands tremble, and the hot tear stain my paper? vengeance—ample vengeance has the almighty already taken; thou my sister, art a ministering angel, but who shall say, where the soul is, which destroyed thee?

Oh! Agnes, thy parting sighs, thy groans, thy agonies, will ever live in my memory: “be
 “ a father to my child, see that she suffer not by
 “ the ignominy under which I languish, restore
 “ her to the rights of birth and fortune, clear
 “ the fame of your dying sister:” these were the parting words of the Agnes you admired, the sister I adored; and can I forget them? oh! never, never, recover her daughter, restore her to me, openly in the face of the day, I acknowledge her, she is an honor to my family, to myself: in her, the meekness of christianity, is happily blended, with the proper dignity of uncontaminated virtue; no false pride, no undue arrogance, in her, disgusts the most penetrating observer; she has so much innate gratitude in her disposition, that the Marchioness St. Lawrens, insisted on her being early informed she was of honourable birth, and independent expectations, lest a sense of obligation, should lower her in her own estimation: wound not her sensibility, said the

noble Marchioness : hers is not the pride of situation, of personal charms, or of temporal advantage ; it is the true dignity of noble blood, united with as noble sentiments : and such Major, indeed is Agnes, for in every other sense, she is

“ Humility herself, divinely mild,

“ Sublime religion’s meek, and modest child.”

The misfortunes of her mother, endear her to my soul ; she is at present the very first cause with me ; nay, I know not whether the domestic grief my protection of her has occasioned, is not on the whole, a matter of internal triumph to me ; were I to expend my whole fortune in litigation with the heirs of Neville, what a poor sacrifice would that be, in comparison with the misery of existing near a year, disunited from my adored wife. Sister ! beloved Agnes ! art thou sensible, canst thou *now* know, thy brother gave up all *his* peace, to secure thine.

She came to me, Major, unattended, and unadorned ; a hired chaise, without a single servant, brought her to Bath ; her dress was as plain, as deep mourning could make it, she had, to avoid observation, left her nun’s apparel at Paris ; I had no remembrance of *her* face, but the moment I cast my eyes on her daughter, who in a plain white jacket, looked the blooming handmaid of the graces ; my sister, the sister I left at Lisbon, seemed to appear before me, in the very dress, and form, in which I saw her, the day before she was professed.

And does nature then speak to the heart of General Moncrass ? said a weak and tremulous voice, which called my attention to the pale mourner, whom the young Agnes was supporting ;

ing; ah! continued she, gazing earnestly on my face, it is the same noble, open countenance, the same feeling heart, the same sensibility, which still graces the faultless form of Reuben Moncrafs.

Nature did then indeed speak to my heart, but the countenance of the fainting female, who sunk on my bosom, did not immediately explain her claims on the soft distress that pervaded my whole system.

She revived, and her eyes opened; as she raised them to heaven, I started; she perceived she was recollected, and mildly requested her young companion to withdraw.

Oh! Melrose, what a scene followed. She sunk on her knees before me, and bending her head and body almost to prostration, hiding her wan face with her emaciated hands, could only weep and groan.

If said I, as my heart informs me, in contradiction to your altered person, you are my sister, my lost Agnes?

Oh! no! no! groaned the penitent Agnes, not *your* sister, not the daughter of the noble Earl, the virtuous Countess of Moncrafs, but a poor, wretched, undone, deserted apostate.

Oh! Reuben, I dare not call thee brother; from the high pinnacle, on which thy unstained honour places *thee*, canst thou stoop in mercy, to the degrader of thy race, to her whose folly is thy reproach; to a wretch whose bursting heart, will soon, very soon be laid open, with all its secret woes, before an offended God.

Oh! Major, it was indeed my sister, it was all that grief, and misery had left of the once beautiful Agnes: it was the only treasure be-
queathed

queathed me, by my honoured father: it was her, whose cheeks, while bathed in duteous tears at parting from her parents, yet glowed in modest confidence, and joy, at being consigned to the protection of her favorite brother: then, she was the opening flower, which the fell blight of sorrow had not blasted! what alas! was she now?

Need I, Major, tell *you*, that I received her, with all her wrongs, to my heart of hearts; that while I clasped her weak, and almost expiring form in my arms, I vowed to perform, religiously, and scrupulously, every behest of her heart; that I received, with solemn regard from her hands, her only child; and that I resolved, whatever it might cost me, to preserve inviolate, 'till her death, the secret history of her unhappy life; yes, my friend! this I swore, and had you seen the innate composure, which extended to her countenance; had you heard the elegant gratitude of her acknowledgments; and had you witnessed her devout thanksgiving to heaven, and her ardent prayers for blessings on her brother, and child; the impression of all on *your* memory, would have been as indelible, as it is on *mine*.

Dear saint! could I wound thee, by telling thee the difficulties of my situation? Oh! no! what barbarian would wilfully disturb the serenity of thy satisfied mind, when all thy griefs were reposed in the sympathising heart of thine only brother; had she known, that the beloved of my soul, my wife, and her lovely daughter, were the beings my promise to her, would oblige me to distress, what an entire reverse, would it have made in the system of consolation, which she fondly said, would support her in her last moments:

ments: God be praised! she died in ignorance of the anguish I have felt on her account; and of the present situation of her daughter.

Reuben delivers you this letter; he rides express to town, accompanied by father Dominick, the good priest, who brought from the Marquis St. Lawrens, my sister's papers and certificates, which were lodged in his hands.

My son has my permission to run away with my sweet Julia immediately; if she will *now* consent to accompany him to Scotland; father Dominick will attend them, and I know, the dear girl will not object to *his* repeating the ceremony; my son will give up every thing for love, but his honor, and his religion.

You are surprised at this arrangement: Lord Ruthven will rave, and Lady Mary consider it as a fresh injury; but no matter; it is an event, necessary to the grand developement, which will take place, the instant I receive the packet, from the Abbess St. Lawrens.

I do not suffer myself to doubt, but you will find Agnes at Mitard's; and as you will be awkwardly predicamented to receive a young lady into *your* house, beg you will, in my name, request Mrs James Butler to invite her to Soho-square.

Adieu, Major, if the excruciating torture of the gout, did not contradict the assertion; I would tell you I expected to be quite happy; yet how infinitely easier to be endured are the most severe bodily pains, than those which are inflicted by grief, and sensibility on the mind.

MONCRASS.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

The Abbess St. Laurens to General Moncrass.

Paris.

IN the short letter I wrote from Abbeville,* I informed you of the beatification of our once-loved, *now* sainted St. Clare: she died, General, as she had lived; a pattern of piety, and an example of resignation; her last hours were painful in the extreme, considering, how her fine form had before suffered, from her long, and lingering decay.

The bishop attended her last moments, with the attentive piety, which became his character; he held one cold hand, while the other grasped her crucifix, through every extremity of her dying agonies; Victoire, said she, after many hours painful struggles, fixing her dim eyes on me; —we shall meet—yes, St. Clare, dear friend of my soul!—*we shall assuredly meet*—they were her last words, the thought gave a faint smile to her features, which death could not remove.

She had given her cabinet to my care, six days before she expired; and it was my intention to have arranged, and sent her papers to you; but I am deprived of the fortitude, which I trusted, would have enabled me to fulfil her desire, and gratify you, by letters from England, which dis-
tress

* This letter does not appear.

treffes me, in a manner that affects my body, as well as soul.

From what unaaccountable fatality, sir, arose the cruel mistake, which has driven your niece from your protection? fate had drawn the fable veil, which her mother entreated might conceal her birth; all mystery ended with St. Clare's life; I had already anticipated the triumph of justice, and of truth; when a young man, who followed me to Abbeville, told me an improbable story of the malevolence of your countrymen, which on my return here, I find confirmed, in the letters from my dear child.

I feel myself inclined to upbraid, to reproach you; but you are a partner in her injuries—injuries which I cannot comprehend, how you can share, without punishing; or at least, without convincing the narrow world, how infinitely her soul, as well as yours, outsoar their wicked surmises.

But perhaps, a delicate, and scrupulous regard, to the injunction of my St. Clare, rendered you silently acquiescent, under so bitter a calumny; and you waited with patience the moment when her death—but let me not call it her death, for *she* can never die—you waited then the commencement of her eternal life, to be absolved of your vow of secrecy; but sir, you have in that case, religiously performed one duty, at the expence of another.

Where is now the dear, the sacred deposit, which your blessed sister left in your hands? read her letters, which I inclose,* the people she is with, the indignities to which she may be exposed,

* The letters wrote previous to Agnes's leaving the Mithard's.

ed, will, I have no doubt, arouse you into an immediate, and active enquiry after her; you will certainly, when you have recovered her, declare her near affinity; you will take the proper steps to prove the marriage of her mother, and claim for her, the legal inheritance, which that marriage secures to her daughter.

But in the mean time, sir, while we arrange, Providence may totally annihilate our plans; the object for whom we are solicitous may suffer, she may be lost; she may fall, the victim of the evil machinations, to which she is exposed; and the fear her letters authorise, actually deranges my senses.

Recover her, sir, for the love of Jesu, recover my Agnes—I cannot touch her mother's papers, while I am thus uncertain of the fate of her child—her writing, over which my eyes flow, are reproaches to my heart; Where is my Agnes? are the only words, that present themselves to my ideas, throughout a posthumous volume, addressed to you; but which from weakness, were put loose in her cabinet, and by that means, became mixed with other papers; most of them letters from the vile Neville, which I will spare you the indignity of seeing.

Oh! General, but that I am too anxious to send you my child's letters, to detain Mr. Harley; who poor youth is not fit for the world; what volumes could I write, without exhausting my feelings for her, who no longer groans, under the pressure of that fate, for which I still weep.

'Till I hear from you, General, 'till I know my Agnes is openly, and honorably received, to her natural home, to the arms of her acknowledged

ledged uncle; or 'till she re-enters my convent,
'till her welcome return, fills every vacuum in
my temporal wishes; peace will be a stranger to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

St. Clare's paquet shall follow as soon as I have
resolution to make it up.

LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

Edward Harley, Esq; to J. Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

HOW often have I called on my friend, and on my amiable Caroline for consolation, how often wearied you with my complaints, with my despair; and shall a day, an hour pass, when my heart is filled with the most transporting rapture—when my glad eye again reviews with joy, the dear scenes of my youthful pleasures, when the bright gleams of prosperity gild my opening prospect, and when the rapture of love, of reciprocal tenderness expand my heart, without my offering all my best hopes to the participation of such faithful, such partial friends?

No, my Caroline! lifted above mortality as I really am, I feel, that *bliss*, beyond what my most sanguine hope painted to my wishes—that even *Agnes*, with the purity of an angel, united to the softest tenderness of dear complying woman, cannot render me perfectly happy, 'till you share it with me.

Yet where, or how shall I begin the extatic tale? I am lost in grateful rapture, when I reflect on the wonderful means by which my felicity has been brought about: and when I recollect the agonies which had almost deprived me of reason, I can hardly believe my happiness is real.

But is it indeed so? am I now writing in the
General's

General's library at Belle-Vue? is it certain that I have just left my Agnes, in all her world of beauty, mild as the gentlest zephyrs—her melodious voice which beggars all descriptions, rendered yet softer by the sweetest of all passions, her cheeks suffused with blushes, and the modest accents of avowed tenderness for her grateful Harley, yet hanging on her coral lips? oh! is all this real? yes, Butler! but let me relate to the best of sisters, and of friends, how I have attained, thus suddenly, to the summit of felicity.

We find, by a letter the General received from Major Melrose, that you are acquainted with our water excursion—but it is also proper, I should tell you by what means I got the information, which carried me after the Dunkirk packet, in pursuit of my Agnes; oh! heaven! and is she indeed mine? the thought is too transporting, I must lay down my pen——

* * * * *

I have relieved my full heart—do not despise me, Butler—I have actually been shedding tears—and now will, with more composure, while my Agnes is retired with Madame Vallmont, continue my happy story.

You understood by my last, I resolved to go to London; I went post all the way, near Barnet a man called to my driver to beg he might get up behind, which was furiously refused—it was then near midnight; but what were hours to me? nor night, nor day afforded rest to my sad spirit! the man kept running, and when he could be heard, repeated his petition, at length, and what right, thought I, have I to roll thus at ease, while a fellow creature, whose anxiety may

may be equal with my own, is thus kept on the rack, both by his impatience, and inability to reach the end of his journey? who knows but he is like me a hapless, deserted lover, and now in this moment experiencing the two extremes of hope and fear, and may not all the nearest, and dearest interest of his heart depend on the hour on which he arrives at the place he is so eager to reach.

These reflections had their weight, I bid the driver open the door of my chaise, and the man very thankfully accepted a seat in it; the act of kindness, totally independant of curiosity being all my aim, I immediately relapsed into the train of corroding reflection, which my fellow traveller had interrupted.

It was so late, or rather early when we stopt at the inn, that I did not chuse to break on your regular hours but ordered a bed there. The person I had taken up was so anxious to be gone, that he was as little disposed as myself, to lose a moment in compliments.

In the morning, after I had breakfasted, and was preparing to come to you, he returned to the inn; and desired to be admitted to thank me for the favor I had done him. In the course of his acknowledgements, he informed me, that he was mate of a French trader—had been to Barnet to take leave of his wife who lived there, previous to his sailing, which was to have been that day; but, that he had received a letter from the captain, informing him that a young lady, who wished to leave England immediately, had engaged him to sail with the morning tide, for which she had made him a very handsome compensation, and he required his mate to join him instantly,

stantly, "now" continued the man, "as ill
"luck would have it, I was out spending the
"evening with my wife, and sister, and did not
"come home 'till I ought to have been on board,
"so that notwithstanding your kindness I have
"lost the voyage."

A lady, friend? said I, eagerly.

"Yes," answered he, "some young hussy
"or other, she was in a plaguey hurry, to get
"out of the kingdom, not for any good I sup-
"pose, though they say she was devilish hand-
"some too."

To me, who conceived the beauty of the whole
earth to center in my Agnes, this was undoubted
intelligence of her; I ran, or rather flew to
Tower-hill, where I met Major Melrose—I have
therefore now to carry my narrative on, from the
time I left Miss Neville in the Major's apartment
at Greenwich.

I returned by a kind of instinct to the fire; the
family who were not insured were making great
lamentation, and poor Miss Farquar was echoed
from one to the other, 'till it drew the notice of
several by-standers, who were informed, a young
lady slept in a part of the house which had first
taken fire, and the stair-case being burnt, it was
impossible for her to have escaped, neither had
she been seen attempting it; at that instant the
part they were speaking of fell in, and poor Miss
Farquar was again the object of general pity.

From this scene rendered more awful by the
terrible end of a fellow creature, I was returning
by the place from whence I was so fortunate as to
rescue Miss Neville, (which having no valuables
in it was now deserted) and was lifting my eyes
in thankfulness to the providence which had pre-
served

served her, when I thought I could perceive a female figure in a leaning attitude at the window, from whence I had taken Julia; but as the shutter was of a light colour, and the figure rested quite against it, I could not for some time distinguish.

I still continued with my eyes fixed on the place, 'till observing the flames rapidly approaching, and still more confirmed in my idea, that some unhappy being was in a state of insensibility either from fright, or suffocation; I resolved to attempt the rescue humanity demanded; the ladder I had got for Miss Neville was removed, and the people were some gathered round the other part of the building, where the Arnold's principal valuables were, endeavouring to save what they could; and others, who were friends to the sufferers, had their attention fixed on the crowd, to prevent their being pilfered, of what they had saved from the fire; a few firemen, and very few there were indeed; but those were also employed in preserving the property.

I called repeatedly both on them, and on the inanimate victim, without gaining any attention from either; at last a lad came up, who asked me if I did not think *that* was a woman? pointing to the window; before I could answer, some trees which were planted at the side of the house took fire, and I then plainly discerned the figure of a female, partly resting on the window frame, and partly against the shutter, and apparently insensible to the danger which surrounded her.

I cried out with a sympathetic terror—three or four stout fellows, watermen, came running towards me, and perceiving there was a life at stake very readily offered their assistance. in our confusion

fusion we could not get a ladder, although I afterwards found we had several times walked over the one I myself had left there—the object before us seemed to inspire the honest watermen, as well as myself; they dragged a large deal table from some other part of the ruins, and placing it against the wall, stood firm while I by help of their shoulders entered the window, where I found a young person alive indeed, but in a strong convulsion fit; I had not a moment to lose, I caught her in my arms, and was in the act of lifting her out of the window, when the inner part of the room gave way, the floor fell in, and I was providentially left on a kind of cross beam, which formed the bow of the room, with the person still in my arms.

I now expected every moment to be buried in the ruins; the men who had humanely assisted me, were so much frightened by the sudden crash of the building, that they retreated very precipitately from the window, nor could all my persuasions and entreaties prevail on them to resume their stations; they advised me to preserve my own life, if I could, declaring it to be an impossibility to save the woman—and with this cordial advice they left me to my fate.

The lad who was still in sight got on the table, but his efforts were too weak to be of any service; I bid him run to the firemen and prevail on them to come to our assistance, a moment might be fatal, which he was going to do, but jumping off the table, entangled his feet in the ladder, and with a joyful cry, and an effort of strength nothing but innate humanity could give him, raised it against the tottering fabric, and I
had

had the supreme happiness to bring my heavenly burthen safe to the ground—

* * * * *

Oh! thou Almighty, thou merciful God! thou whose inscrutable wisdom is infinite as thy goodness—and both, boundless as thy power, oh! mayest thou withdraw the breath of life from thy thankful servant, when the blessing of that hour is forgotten.

* * * * *

Sir (said the poor lad, capering for joy) my mother lives just by—better carry the woman there, she'll be out of the croud; and the good creature ran before to shew me the way.

My hair, which had got out of the ribbon was burnt, my face, and hands were singed, and blackened by the smoke and sulphur, but by supporting my angel—for oh! Butler! it was Agnes herself partly out of the window, I had preserved her from injury.

We presently got to the house (or I should I believe, say hut) where we found the boy's mother was gone to the fire, and had left a light on her rush chair, which would in all probability, had we not arrived in the instant, have made her a sufferer by the same calamity she was witnessing at her neighbours.

There was a bed in the room on which I laid my Agnes; ah! when will my heart cease to throb when I proudly call her mine! the boy brought water, and I was beginning to bathe her temples, when he approached with a light, and I discovered—heavenly God!—I yet tremble—I cease to respire—I feel her deliverance, but Butler

ler I also feel, and sink under the horror of the sensation, the *moment*, the *atom* there was between me and eternal perdition: to live! to exist! to breathe the vital air! and walk erect among the sons of men when *she* was no more!—*impossible!*—*impossible!*

Again the violence of my agitation breaks on my narrative—oh! my friend, I yet see her, lifeless, and deserted—the flower of the world—the pride of nature—the soul of elegance and harmony—the life and light of my existence, was within one little moment of being *lost for ever*—do you not shudder, Butler?—sinks not your Caroline with terror on your bosom—oh! if you have sympathy—if you love your Harley—you will, like him, fly the dreadful recollection, and rejoice it is past.

EDWARD HARLEY.

L E T T E R IX.

Edward Harley to J. Butler in continuation.

Belle-Vue.

THE first view of my Agnes deprived me of motion—I forgot her situation—the lad held the water in one hand, and the light in the other—I looked, and looked again—I examined her features—knelt before her—felt her hands—her hair—nay, I ventured to touch her cheek, it was then I perceived my hands were black, the print of my fingers remained on her delicate skin. Oh! Butler, what triumph was there in that? yet my soul glowed in transport, when I beheld the trace of my touch, on the soft down of her cheek. Avaunt you sensualists, you in whose gratifications soul has no share, and you whose passions are lost in the tasteless apathy, you mis-call wisdom—look not on my Agnes—despise not her adoring Harley—for on trifles even lighter than this will the enamoured soul dwell with rapture.

But hark! she sighs—her eyes open—they shine on her Harley—they illumine the poor hut—she cast them fearfully round.

Where am I? who a reyou, sir? what a terrible dream am I awoke from? or is it real? where is?—but who are you sir?

I was at her feet, Butler, but could not speak a word.

How

How did I get here? said she, addressing the boy, is Mr. Arnold's house burnt?

Aye, down to the very ground, and you must have been burnt in it, an it had not been for I, and that gentleman.

She cast her lovely eyes down on me, they were swimming with tears, the black on my face prevented her knowing me.

I thank you, sir, I remember now too much—yes, (turning half from me) I thank you, sir, I am a very poor creature, not worth saving, my thanks are poor, but I have nothing else to offer—will you (to the lad) conduct me where I may find the unfortunate family?

What I felt at that moment is inexpressible, not knowing that my face was of the same sable hue with my hands, I concluded the coldness of her address was intended; she was going, she had actually reached the door, my arms were spread and I fell down on my face, I could not speak—she was alarmed.

Alas! sir, what is the matter? are you hurt? speech was now returned to me.

Ah! Agnes! cried I, cruel Agnes! stay and see me expire at your feet, to obtain that one privilege, I have long followed thy fleeting shade, leave me not now without pardoning the wretched Harley.

She instantly returned from the door, and extending her white hand, Harley, is it you? is it indeed you? and am I so happy as to owe my life to Harley? rise my friend, why do you talk of death? you who are so worthy to live, and be the happiest of men. Oh! Butler, what words were these, I hardly dared to breathe lest I should

lose a particle she uttered, she acknowledged her Harley was dear to her.

I am going, said the angel, to my friends in France, where I must never see my generous deliverer; but I may pray for him, I may acknowledge without blushing, how mentally dear he is to me.

No, Agnes, answered I, let me conduct thee back to the noble, the injured Moncrafs; Madame St. Lawrens commands.

Ah! what is it you say, Harley, do you know that honored friend and St. Clare? oh! do they yet love their unfortunate Agnes? how know you it is their command I should return to General Moncrafs? have they received my letters? are they acquainted with the reason of my quitting Belle-Vue? what have I not suffered since I took that step, but (putting both her hands before her face, and with a tone at once graceful and moving) who could bear? but say (as if flying from the recollection) have you seen Madame St. Lawrens?

I answered I had.

And St. Clare? but why did they not answer my letters? oh! you would not believe to what cruel indignities, what hardships their silence has exposed me.

I told her Madame St. Lawrens was not at her convent when they arrived, that when she returned from Abbeville—

From Abbeville do you say—oh! my God! what has happened there? St. Clare, my beloved St. Clare is then no more—oh! my heart suggested some dreadful reason for their not writing. Blessed virgin! (falling on her knees, and crossing her lovely arms on her breast, her streaming eyes

eyes lifted up to heaven) if from thy holy bosom, my loved, my honored St. Clare, can look down on the miserable being she has left to deplore her loss, oh! may she know the pangs of duteous sorrow which now rend the heart of her Agnes; alas, dear saint! why was I not with thee? why did I not administer to thy last moments? Oh! Harley, your looks confirm my sad presages, she is dead, St. Clare the most tender friend, the maternal guide of my youth is no more.

I could not deceive her, and my silence was a mournful confirmation of the fatal event; yet I besought her to be comforted, Madame St. Lawrens yet lives, and lives but in her Agnes.

Oh! let us fly to her, my dear, my honored lady Abbess; what have not been your sufferings in this dreadful separation; but you are following St. Clare, a saint on earth can have no doubts but she shall rejoin that angel in her state of purification, let us go, sir, let me throw myself with all my faults at her feet, she will forgive, and pity the frailty of her Agnes.

It was with great difficulty I could persuade her to desist from her resolution of going to France; I urged Madam St. Lawrens's wish, the General's impatience to see her, his indisposition, and the letters he had received from St. Clare wrote with her dying hand, which required her immediate presence at Belle-Vue.

The last plea affected her, she would go, she would never disobey the injunctions of her beatified friend.

By this time the boy was fast asleep; he neither understood our conversation, nor did our agitation excite his curiosity; I roused him, and, Agnes chusing, if, as she said she was to

go to Belle-Vue to set out without any present explanation with the Arnold's; sent him to get a post-chaise, he returned in five minutes, I, prouder of my burden than of a monarch's diadem, lifted her into the chaise, and followed myself: we drove to the first stage beyond London, when I prevailed on her to take some rest, while I made some purchases in the town, such as a cloak, and some linen I thought she would want.

I told the woman at the shop the accident of the fire; and the escape of my angel, that she had a long journey to go, and left it to her to procure what necessaries might be immediately wanted; she acquitted herself so well that I had the bliss to see my Agnes appear dressed in her new habiliment, and smiling her approbation at the pains her happy Edward had taken.

I did not you may be sure hurry the drivers, never was such a journey—I opened my full and honest heart to the charmer of my soul; but, oh! Butler! how shall I do justice to the modest delicacy of her manner, when she owned all the affections of her heart were your Edward's.

My heart, said she (the crimson glow of modesty mantling in her cheek) is all I can call my own; *that* it is no merit in me to give you, for the truant had left *me*, it had abjured *my* power, long before I was sensible of its loss, but in making this confession, I do not engage my person, *that* must not be disposed of but with the approbation of Madame St. Lawrens; yet one thing I *will* promise my Harley, he shall never have any competitor in the heart of Agnes, but her God.

Think—no, you cannot, it is not in language to express, in heart to conceive my transports during the three days we were on the road.

When

When we arrived at Belle-Vue, Madame de Vallmont was walking on the lawn; she saw Agnes, and too happy for caution, ran back into the house, and informed the General of our arrival; then without waiting to know the effect of her precipitancy, returned as quickly to welcome Miss de Courci back; who was immediately summoned to the General's apartment.

My agitation during the painful suspense which her stay occasioned, is not to be described; I waited alone near an hour; no door opened, nor being was heard to move; all was still, and hush as silence itself; at length a storm succeeded the calm, Miss de Courci was in fits, the General relapsed, and the house in confusion.

Madame de Vallmont came to me, and apologised for leaving me so long; the General, said she, is too much affected to see you, Miss de Courci is very ill, and as for me, my heart feels too much for these amiable persons; you must leave us now, you will soon hear from us.

I begged she would charge herself with my respectful compliments, and with a heavy heart returned to the Hermitage.

This morning an invitation to dinner was brought by a servant, who told me, he had the honor to be appointed to wait on his master's niece.

His niece, answered I, I never heard he had one.

O your honor knows her well enough, Miss de Courci is his niece.

The invitation was from the General, and concluded with a desire, if Mr. Harley had recovered the fatigue of his journey, to see him early.

I immediately obeyed the welcome mandate, and was admitted to the General as soon as I was announced.

Never, my dear Butler, was a man so altered, the traces of sorrow and sickness were too visible on his fine countenance, but a gleam of pleasing satisfaction predominated. Dear Harley, said the worthy man, making an ineffectual effort to rise, what obligations have you conferred on me, on my amiable girl; how can I reward the service I have received from you?

Oh! Butler! Madame St. Lawrens had said, my Agnes was heiress to immense wealth—that was a circumstance I had not once thought of during our journey; to love, to be beloved by her, was a source of such boundless joy, I could admit of no other thought; but it now rushed on my memory, and the General's acknowledgment contributed to oppress me.

How easy, thought I, would it be to reward me, if indeed he values so highly the life I preserved, by bestowing on me the only blessing after which my heart aspires; but then the fatal, the to me undesirable acquisition of wealth, recurred to my idea; how should I dare from my humble station, with my moderate fortune, to look up to the paragon of the earth; who besides the beauty of her charming person, and the goodness of an angel, had also the endowments of wealth, to render her an object of universal adoration? I turned pale, my voice faltered—I dared not meet the General's eye, but my fears were quickly dispersed.

Sit down, my worthy young friend, continued the truly noble minded General, it was the axiom of a wise writer, that “there cannot be a more
“unhappy

“unhappy man in the world, than him who
 “has never experienced adversity.” I am not
 that unhappy man; but my sorrows did not pro-
 ceed merely from a sudden reverse of fortune, my
 whole life hitherto, (a short interval only except-
 ed) has been one continued series of misfortune;
 I yet remember when at your age I first saw and
 loved Lady Mary Ruthven; I then experienced
 the bitterness of hopeless love, the mortification
 of degraded fortunes, and the anguish of despair,
 neither the calamities of my family, nor the suc-
 cessive disappointment of my hopes, were to be
 compared to what I then suffered.

Yet to me,

“Sweet have been the ills of adversity,
 “Which like the toad ugly and venomous
 “Wears yet a jewel in his head

I have been a strict observer of your disposition,
 and I speak it to your credit; the more narrowly
 I have attended to the movements of your mind,
 the better I have been pleased; I early saw your
 attachment to Agnes, I knew your fortune was
 moderate, but the many years of experience I
 have had, the various vicissitudes of fortune I
 have seen, have at least taught me one useful les-
 son; it has shewn me, the only intrinsically va-
 luable work of the creation, is the *human heart*;
 yours, Mr. Harley, is above price, and Agnes
 only can equal you in *modest merit*, in *virtue*,
 and in *truth*.

Perhaps I shall incur the world's censure for
 thus disposing of my niece, perhaps I might flat-
 ter myself, that her beauty, and fortune, would
 if seen, and known, restore the house of Mon-
 crass to its pristine honors, but ambition has no

charms for her, and far from me be the wish to inspire her with so turbulent a passion.

You are acquainted with the history of my family; a beloved twin sister and myself were the only remains of an ancient and honorable house; heirs to the misfortune entailed on an unhappy race, we were born to be buffeted with the billows of adversity: my poor bark was safely laid up in port; patience, and fortitude, had enabled me to support myself, 'till my gracious maker, by his own unerring wisdom, conducted me with peace and honor to the arms of the woman I adored. But my sister became a victim to deceit, and treachery; she sunk under the accumulated woes inflicted on her by a barbarous violator of female honor; yet she had no fault, no crime, after the breach of her holy vows to expiate; that indeed was of such an atrocious nature, no wonder the justice of an offended God pursued her, and made the object of her sinful apostasy, the source of her misery, she is now no more, Agnes is her only child.

He stopt a moment and turned his head away.

As soon as the benevolence of our sovereign was generally known, my unhappy sister obtained (what she had long sought for in vain) some tidings of her brother; she was a lay member of the convent where she breathed her last, and therefore her absence was dispensed with, while she brought her child to me, briefly told her sad story, and claimed my protection, for the offspring of her ill-placed love.

There were circumstances attending her history I could not immediately reveal, my beloved wife conceived herself injured, she considered my attachment to Agnes as criminal, nothing would render

render her easy, but discoveries I was bound not to make, we parted; but it was not so easy to eradicate the tenderness so many years had impressed on my heart; my love for her, and my life were bound in the same chain; my health has been declining, had I died she would have seen her Moncrafs was unfortunate, but not guilty. I have now hope our re-union will not be deferred, 'till I am no longer capable of assisting the dear woman to reconcile her violent resentment against me to her own heart.

Reuben is gone to London, with my consent to take his Julia's offered hand; it will hurt Lady Mary at first, but in the end she will know it is an act of kindness. You have in the meanwhile, *my* leave to pay your court to Agnes, win her my boy, and wear her.

Butler, Caroline—do you think I did not kneel, ah! conceive the happiness of your

HARLEY.

LETTER

L E T T E R X.

General Moncrafts to Major Melrose.

Belle Vue.

WITH Ned Harley on the right, and Agnes on the left of my gouty chair, I call for your congratulations my dear Major. Hope once more returns to the habitation she had deserted, and I now look forward to lengthened days and a tranquil old age. I commission you to promise every thing to my dear Mary—as to the Earl's narrow surmise, respecting my design to aggrandize my son, at the expence of Miss Neville, a short time will convince him how little I deserve such an illiberal censure; and the reflection will rebound from *me* to *him*. The moment I hear from Reuben that Julia and he are one, I will inclose to you the long, sad history of Agnes Moncrafts, a history that will involve both Lady Mary, and her daughter in difficulties she does not foresee; she refuses to believe my consanguinity to Agnes, 'till the marriage hath actually taken place—ungenerous Mary! shall I owe nothing to your confidence?—well be it so—mine will be the *triumph*.

Now the mysteries *are* in a train for exposition, you will not deny us your company; you will surely grace the nuptials of your young favorite, and you will see in my charming niece, the same
blooming

blooming creature you lamented so much at Lisbon.

The punishment of the French scoundrel is an object beneath our attention, but it is certainly right to reward the Arnold's; yet that I think may be deferred 'till the return of the happy pairs (as I trust they will be) to London. Agnes says, she shall like to see Julia make her own explanation at Greenwich.

Be so good as to hasten Dighton, I would have the two sets exactly alike, and if there are finer in the possession of any private lady in the kingdom, I shall not forgive him.

* * * * *

Reuben and his bride are this moment arrived — I inclose the packet for Lady Mary, which you will deliver to her immediately.

MONCRASS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XI.

*Major Melrose to General Moncrafts.**London.**My dear General,*

MY chaise was at the door, and a whole cargo of trunks chained on containing new finery, to deck out the old beau, at the approaching wedding, when I received your packet.

As I expected so soon to see you, I did not in my last inform you, that the Earl of Ruthven had been attacked with a second paralytic stroke; and that Lady Mary had again attended him to Bath.

I have waited on Mrs. Dowager Butler, she told me, she had heard from you, and that she should follow Lady Mary to Bath in two days; I consulted her on the necessity of my being the personal olive bearer, and we both agreed, that after the extreme violence of her resentment, the conviction of your faith, and her own error, would come more acceptably to Lady Mary unwitnessed; shall I confess, General? I was rejoiced the dowager's opinion tallied with mine on this occasion.

To confess truth, I felt myself far more inclined to join the contented party at Belle-Vue,
than

than to do penance in the company of the worst half of the old peer. All Lord Ruthven's pleasure and good-humour lay on the side which is now dead, nothing remains but dotage on his daughter, and an undiminished, nay faith, I think it is an increased regard for the dignity of his rank—*our family—our house—and our name*, is the cuckoo song he is never weary of singing; and you know, General, it will be natural for Lady Mary to be happy, when she receives your letter; and it will be just in her to be penitent, for the injury she has done you; both which from what I know of her ladyship, I think she will chuse to be in solo: in that case, as I said before, I must have waited to escorte her to Belle-Vue; and in the interval, for no lady can set out on a journey, without giving half a thousand directions, about filling the imperial, should have been consigned to old honor, and dignity, instead of which, I shall be a man of consequence at Belle-Vue.

For these wise reasons, all approved by the old dowager who is Lady Mary's double; *mind that*, General; I have sent Alton express to Bath, with your dispatches; and shall set out to-morrow, on my way to Belle-Vue.

My boy, my dear runaway boy invites me, and let me tell you, I am in my own estimation of importance enough to be consulted on the marriage settlement.

When I adored your divine sister, how little did I foresee a child of her race, would inherit my fortune, but so it shall be—and notwithstanding your family pride, General, he must be a Melrose, let Reuben support your name, and Harley mine.

That

That little madcap Julia, cost me this morning a thousand pounds; she will have the vanity to say, her eyes wanted no brilliants to set them off—as to Mrs. Harley, she and I shall settle our accounts privately.

An old fellow! no such matter—I am this day but one and thirty; and shall be six years younger when I see my boy's happiness complete.

Have you any very young, very handsome, and very witty damsels in your part of the world, to whom I may in an *honorable* way, toss my handkerchief? I shall be lost, if you have nobody I can make love to.

Madame Vallmont is too old, and Mrs. Butler still older, what as Lord Ogleby says, “can I possibly do with these women?” who are neither young nor foolish.

Tell Julia, she must romp with me, and tell that angelic creature, Agnes, I will not bate her an ace of her mother's beauty——let me see, she had blue eyes, Agnes, it seems has black; well, as we can't have blue, why black must do; but her long dark eye lashes, her full but arched brow, her forehead of ivory, her coral lips which always a little divided shewed the pearl, she called teeth, the dimple on her left cheek, and the two brown moles near her under lip, the flowing hair, neck, shape, and arms, of Agnes Moncreafs, I shall look for in her daughter, besides

“Song, beauty, youth, harmony,

“For these were all hers.”

I shall love the gipsy I know I shall, better than any human being, if she is like her mother.

Certainly, counsellor, if you trust her, though upon my soul, 'tis no small risk.

I was in terrible distress, for a beautiful lass to
make

make love to, when just in the God speed, who should come in, but Butler, and his pretty wife. He is obliged to attend the circuit, and she, impatient to be at Belle-Vue: I told her, I was as mad, as a simple, rattle brained *old fellow* could be, and advised her not to put herself under my protection.

Indeed, Major, she shall.

Well said, Butler, keep to the *she shall*, and thou art in luck.

I breakfast with them to-morrow, and then, hey presto, and away to Belle-Vue.

MELROSE.

The P A C Q U E T.

L E T T E R XII.

*General Moncrafts to Lady Mary Moncrafts.**Belle-Vue.*

IT is now, my dear Mary, ten months, since the fatal separation took place that deprived the fondest husband, the sincerest friend, of all that was dear to him in woman; a period of time more painfully tedious to your Moncrafts, than even the equal number of years which divided me from my first, last and only love; when dwelling among savages, my soul inclined to beings more congenial with itself, and when in the whole christian world, which in comparison with the Ethiop, was all that was desirable; my Mary Ruthven still dwelt on my imagination, loveliest, among the lovely.

Yet, dear wife of my fond affection, I blame not you, and believe existence would now be a burthen to me, were I not sure that you would acquit me of every thought of inconstancy to the woman on whom I doat; and of every intention to offend your noble father, or injure my lovely Julia.—Alas! my dearest life! the vices that doom that dear child to bear the mark of heritable shame, does not originate with Moncrafts. No, Lord Ruthven! the misfortunes of your family
take

take their date from your tearing more than his life from him, her on whom 'till death he will doat.

I have wrote to Mrs. Butler to entreat she will be with you when this packet arrives, and I beg my loved wife will recollect that the man whose villainy has so deplorably injured her is at his *grand account*: that Moncrass her real husband yet lives to adore her, to protect her child, and drop the veil of oblivion over every painful remembrance; and if the love she once bore him, is not totally eradicated, that thought will carry her with fortitude through the sad story of Agnes, *once Moncrass*, and tremble not, Mary, dear creature remember, that though I allowed, in the excess of passion, under the dominion of the baneful influence of jealousy, for all the weakness of a fond woman; yet in a cause where justice, and humanity are blended; I expect you will resume your former perfect self, and soar above the narrow prejudices of weaker minds: in a word, that you will again be the daughter of the house of Ruthven, the wife of Moncrass.

This Agnes Moncrass then whom at my departure from the Brazils, I left a professed nun, and whom you have often seen me lament as lost, not only to me but to God—was the woman whose visit to me in England, was the occasion of so many bitter hours to us both—the young creature for whom my Mary believed I abandoned *her*—her daughter, and both parent and child had a legal right to the name of — but my trembling hand cannot write the hateful characters, which rob my wife of her matronly right, and stigmatizes her only child; indeed my love I cannot—I must after once more entreating you to be yourself, refer you to my poor sister's last packet.

MONCRASS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIII.

*St. Clare to General Moncrass.**Inclosed in the preceding.**Abbeville.*

THE awful moment is approaching, it is already in view; when your sister will appear, with all her sins on her head, before the omnipotent creator of the world; when her immortal soul, no longer incumbered with this frail, this slow consuming body, will mount to the blessed throne, where mercy is united with justice; where the sad secret which has long rankled in her perturbed bosom will be laid bare, and where the irrevocable sentence of happiness, or misery, will be pronounced on the deathless part of your Agnes.

This therefore, brother, is the solemn period your unhappy sister fixes on, to pen her sad tale; even now, when the last important change, which proves in one silent moment, more than ages of eloquence, and philosophy, the futility, the nothingness of all human attainments, is already at hand; when you, my loved Reuben, and one more link of the heavy chain which once dragged my soul from heaven, are only in existence.

The all-seeing eye, my brother is *now* on me,
it

it pierces the dark cell of unabsolved penitence ; at the time you will read this letter, I shall behold my maker face to face : I pray I may be in mercy spared, that my painful existence may be lengthened, 'till I have retraced the dreadful story of my woes, and of my offences ; that so my fate may afford a warning to atone in some degree, for the sinfulness of an example, which has dishonoured my family, my friends, and my religion.

Unprejudiced by passion, unbiassed by interest, under the immediate eye of God, and in momentary expectation of the last summons to his judgment, ah ! my brother ! need I other vouchers for my veracity ?

When warm in youthful ardour, glowing with courage, and shining in wisdom ; far above his years ; I parted with the most amiable of brothers ; he left me, happiest among the happy, and innocent, yet why need I say that, is it in nature for the *guilty* to be *happy* ?

Victoire St. Lawrens was a novice in the convent where I was professed ; and so entire was our friendship, she implored her father the Marquis to suffer her to take her vows at Lisbon, although his recall to France was hourly expected ; but even filial love gave place to the union of friendship and religion ; she, but, ah ! brother ! need I speak of her virtue, her piety, or her benevolence ; have they not increased with her years, and are they not at this moment, bright presages of eternal glory ?

Beloved St. Lawrens—thou constant friend to the unfortunate Agnes—thy tears e'er thou wilt see this last address from a dying penitent, will have bedewed the urn of her, who ever
loved

loved the virtue she could not emulate ; from the grave, Victoire, I call on thee ; thy sacred word, the unimpeached pledge of truth, will confirm the story of my disastrous fate ; for hast thou not been to me, the firm rock on which my soul rested ?

At the moment when the misfortunes of our family, severed from me my uncle, and my brother, my tears flowed into the bosom of Victoire, there I found consolation ; she was equally the ministring angel of comfort, and of hope ; my grief at parting with the dear, and only relations heaven had spared me ; was softened by her wisdom and tenderness.

I was young and inexperienced in the ways of the great world, the little one epitomized within the walls of our convent, shewed, it is true, some instances of selfishness, and narrow minds which dishonor the God to whom they were devoted.

But how inadequate were those, to the number of the daughters of sanctity, and meekness ; and Victoire was herself an host to the credit of religion—the bright rays of her unspotted purity shone on me, I shared in the encomiums bestowed on her ; our friendship was as perfect as our natures were uncorrupt ; we were uncontaminated by bad example, and alike free from the turbulent passion of pride, or the more degrading one of envy, and our cheerfulness was not tainted by unrepented sin.

In this sweet intercourse of friendship, and the religious exercises of our convent ; ah ! what a blessed retrospect, it was then only your sister knew real peace.

The confidence which the Marchioness St. Lawrens placed in her Victoire was unlimited ;
that

that amiable woman had formed the mind of her daughter after her own model, and knew the strength of her principles :

She furnished her apartment with books, selected carefully for the embellishment of her mind, without inspiring a desire of mixing in society ; I partook with Victoire of the pleasure this maternal indulgence afforded.

At our devotions, one soul seemed to animate us, and our superiour, who was not remarkably lavish of her commendations, would often say, such pure offerings to God reflected honor on her sisterhood.

Thus, my brother, from seventeen to nineteen, blamelessly lived your Agnes ; at that period—

Oh God ! have the deluge of tears I have shed, the blood which has dropped from my heart, the sorrow, the distraction which has rent my soul ; God of mercy ! has it not all expiated ? oh ! before I go hence and am no more shall I not know it has ?

An English lady was placed by her brother as a boarder at our convent, Miss Mountague was handsome, lively and fascinating ; she had a wildness in her manner which appeared to be tempered with innocence, and sweetness of disposition. She distinguished Victoire and her friend, and we were equally pleased with her ; we were soon made the confidants of her situation.

Mr. Mountague and herself were nearly related to the English consul to whom they were visitors, when he discovered that a favoured lover had followed his sister to Lisbon, whom neither he nor the consul approved ; she was therefore sent to the convent, to be kept, if possible

fible, from having any connection with the person they disliked.

This procedure exceedingly exasperated Miss Mountague, who represented her lover, in all the glowing colours of a first and fond attachment; he was a man she protested of innate worth, and unimpeach'd honor; that her brother's dislike to him arose from mere family pique, that he *assumed* a right he had *not* of fettering her inclinations, and that in fine, as soon as she was at age, she would certainly give her hand, and fortune, to him who was already in possession of her heart.

Young women, even after they have abjured the world themselves, feel an aptitude to become interested partizans in every tale of love committed to their confidence.

Victoire, and I were anxious for the fate of the persecuted Miss Mountague, and her charming lover, and notwithstanding the vigilance of the lady Abbess, who, as Miss Mountague was a catholic, had hopes, which were probably encouraged by her brother, of prevailing on her to take the veil, he found means to write to her, letters, and billets, which we read with eager curiosity; they were pen'd with all the ardour of juvenile attachment, happily blended with a fine understanding; and proved the talents of the writer to have been cultivated with no small pains.

Victoire, whose happy temperament of mind accorded with the vows she was destined to take, considered those letters as glowing pictures of the human mind; whose fervor, being directed to the creature instead of the creator, was disturbed by its own violence.

She

She acknowledged the elegant style of the writer, but *her* general comment was—what pity such fine talents were not employed in the service of the holy church; if he were a priest, could we send him on a mission, what heart so obdurate but must be conquered by his eloquence; what ignorance so stubborn, but must be subdued by the vivacity of his ideas; ah! Mountague, she would add, you owe this man to God.

My mind, fated to error, was more warm in its approbation, on less laudable motives; I had hitherto no conception of other sentiments, than what the devotions we regularly paid our Maker, my friendship for Victoire, and the fraternal love for an absent brother inspired; but Miss Mountague's correspondence, her passionate expressions, and her animated description of her own feelings, though all strictly delicate, discovered a new, and altogether pleasing union of soul, from which *my* vow excluded *me*.

That vow, and all its concomitants, once so desirable, became less, and less pleasing; the world, as the fair seducer painted it, was too great a sacrifice to be given up, without some experience, and great deliberation.

The misfortunes of my family, recurred with aggravated sorrow to my memory; it had not only deprived me of parents, fortune, and family honors; but it had also cut me off from all the social blessings of existence, and immured me in the prime of my days, in the austere gloom of a convent, when the delight I took in the dangerous conversation of the English boarder, convinced me, that my fate and inclinations were far from being united. But as the wanderings of the heart were ever attended with a conviction

that it was now too late to recal my vow, or change my situation; the new impression which arose from the imbecility and inexperience of a young mind, wore insensibly away.

The correspondence of the lovers was at length discovered, and for some time Miss Mountague was a prey to the most anxious suspense.

One day she was told a lady from the consul waited to speak to her at the grate: what new expedient? cried she, as she sullenly obeyed the summons—she staid a long while: and at her return, her countenance flushed, and animated, anticipated the confidence she was disposed to place in us—she owned she had heard from her lover, whose passion enabled him to surmount every obstacle; the same lady, she said, promised to visit the convent next day, and would be accompanied by a Scotch friend, extremely desirous of paying her respects to me.

It is not mere fancy, my dear brother, which through life impresses the mind with an affectionate, a sympathetic regard for our native country: No, it is a combination of the most pleasing ideas, which calls the memory back through the subtle maze of passing events, to the place from whence we derive our existence; and there fixes it, with a partial and melting sensibility, on scenes of juvenile pleasure; the endearing fascination unites person to place; and thus, while we remember the regretted and never to be recalled scenes of our youth, when borne by destiny to a different part of the globe; the involuntary joy we feel on meeting those, whose first breath was drawn with ours, is an oblation every congenial mind will offer to its native country.

Scotland

Scotland was a paradise to which I must never return, but it was nevertheless the Eden of my imagination.

Our noble castle, graced with an owner whose open heart, and giving hand, rendered it the asylum of distress; and the dignity, the virtue of our parents, yet lived in my memory.

What were the luxuriant vineyards, the fertile earth, which from its heated bowels sent forth the choicest fruits, and most esteemed viands? what in comparison were they to the serene highland brow, where once our lofty turrets overlooked the large domain, and numerous vassalage, of the house of Moncrass? to the white flocks which fed in peaceful luxury on the mountain tops, the cattle which graced the valley sides, the native sound of our old minstrel's bagpipe, and the rude dance in our large hall, where at sun-set, the young men and maidens met to solace in honest mirth after the labours of the day? a thankful sacrifice no less acceptable to the prince of peace, than holy prayers, from the deep monastic cell.

Ah! Moncrass! even now, while the dim glimmering of the consuming taper, reminds me how fast the long night approaches; *even now*, when in humble hope of the eternal day, which I trust will break on my soul, still to thee dear native Scotland do I turn; and as my first breath, so will my last be thine

Forgive me brother, I wander, alas! no wonder; my senses sink at the recollection.

Oh! Scotland! dear country! that saw my noble father! the father also of his clan! the friend of mankind! him, and his many sons, fit forms for heroes! and fit minds for saints! with

all their faithful followers laid low: my mother too, my graceful matronly elegant mother! with her young Duncan, her last born, blooming cherub, brother! brother! *we* were absent, *we* can only conceive, the agonies of her soul, when abandoning herself to despair, she fled from her castle:—ah! could not her birth, her innate dignity? could not the innocence of the blue-eyed Duncan save them?

Oh! Scotland! Scotland! how hast thou encroached on the few hours of life, left the miserable daughter of a ruined family—thy name was a passport to my unalienable heart; *that* Miss Mountague well knew.

Ah! said I, Victoire, this stranger; perhaps she was known to my father, my mother, my brothers, fallen is the boast of Scotland, alas! *they* are no more.

Eagerly did I wait her arrival.

Miss Mountague was unusually solicitous about the decoration of her person; and when I saw her charmingly attired for the interview, I for the first time regretted, that my order would not suffer me to add the same ornamental additions to my person, which I simply fancied were all that were wanting, to render me equally lovely with her.

The important bell at length rang, the visitors were announced.

I ran to apprise Victoire, to my extreme vexation the Marchioness was in the garden with her, I was therefore obliged to accompany the English boarder alone; I regretted the absence of my friend, as if from a presage of the events which were to take their date, from this fatal visit; and expressed a repugnance at going to the grate,

grate, without her, which Miss Mountague found it no easy matter, to subdue ; at length partly prevailed on by her entreaties, and partly laughed out of the childish subjection, as she gaily termed my attachment to Victoire, I accompanied her to the grate.

Two tall elegant figures were waiting, they accosted us very politely in the English tongue : Miss Mountague presented me as Lady Agnes Moncrass, her friends were full of acknowledgments for the honor I conferred on them, *one of them*, her I thought my countrywoman, *particularly*. The wild girl, insisted on removing my veil, merely to satisfy them, I had the cast of my family, and was not an ugly Portuguese.

There was a sprightly kind of resolution in this young woman, which was seldom overcome ; yet her perseverance had nothing disgusting in it, with Victoire and me, she always carried any point she chose ; she detested the holy order, among whom her brother had placed her ; nuns, not individually, but as a body, were her aversion ; and notwithstanding all our asseveration, that the habit was our choice, she gave Victoire and myself, the appellation of beautiful martyrs.

Well, brother ! you conceive the source of my ruin ; you behold me in violation of our rules, unveiled ; nothing of flattery was omitted to reconcile me to myself on the occasion, and the gratitude of the two strangers for such an unusual favor, was unbounded.

Ah ! said the one, who had not before visited Miss Mountague, is it possible so young, so enchantingly lovely, you can resolve to bury such beauty, such elegance in a cloyster ? yet, added

the insinuator, that resolution, though injurious to yourself, may, in the general be of advantage to society ; since wherever you are seen, the impressions made by that face, will be indelible.

The tender tone in which this speech was delivered, and the sigh which followed it, rather surprised, but did not alarm me.

Miss Mountague presently removed to the farther end of the grate, and the conversation she was holding was sinking into a low whisper, which she appeared not to wish should be interrupted ; and as I could readily conjecture the subject on which she was so wholly engrossed, I could not but enter on some kind of chat with the other visitor ; yet when she praised the beauty of my person, and regretted my vow, I thanked her, but had the prudence to change the subject.

We insensibly spoke of music, *that* she found was the next enchanting thing about me, I was indeed a *Moncrass*, my mother was allowed to be a perfect harmonist, my tears started, so you know brother she was.

My part in the anthem we chaunted at mass the Sunday before, was I found familiar to this person, who remarked on my beautiful tenor notes, and declared, that while *my* voice was distinguished, the church was the heaven of heavens.

A message from the Marchioness St. Lawrens, called me unwillingly from the grate, which I left, I confessed with reluctance ; Miss Mountague was quite out of humour, and I observed, a saddening cloud gathering in the eyes of my new friend, which communicated to my own.

I attended the Marchioness, but was restless,
absent,

absent, and inattentive ; I fancied myself indisposed ; even the company of my beloved Victoire, grew irksome, I retired on pretence of a violent head-ach to my cell : even there, the voice, look, and engaging manner of the stranger pursued me.

The sensations, excited by the too pleasing recollection, of all that had passed during my stay at the grate, were altogether new, and delightful ; there needed not the attraction of country to tempt me, to a second meeting with the charming stranger ; I even desired it, most ardently desired it ; and was unreasonably displeased with Miss Mountague, at our next interview, because she gave no hint that her friends wished to repeat their visit.

The next day high mass was performed, for the soul of one of the heads of a neighbouring convent ; ah ! thought I if my friend received such pleasure from the sound of my voice, shall I not gratify so obliging a creature, by my best exertions ! doubtless, if I was tolerable *before*, I shall be more so *now*.

If ever my voice merited the encomiums bestowed on it—it was then ; the whole choir complimented me, do you not shudder at my wickedness ? yes, my soul was raised to a rapturous pitch of harmony ; the sisters revered the fervency of my devotion, and the bishop who performed the service, told our superior, that my voice inspired devotion in the most careless ; it is, said the good prelate, truly seraphic ; and I observed that in the body of the church, the voice of Agnes, wrought more on my flock than my sermon : blushes crimsoned my guilty cheeks, at the commendations, which had the real source

of my zeal been known, would have been changed to reproof; I congratulated myself it was not; ah! brother, in that hour of sin, I forgot the all-searching eye of heaven is every where.

Victoire questioned me respecting the strangers, I told her they were agreeable, but forbore to add, that they were enchanting.

The next day, Miss Mountague asked me to walk in the garden, Victoire as usual accompanied us; I read in the eyes of the English boarder, her vexation, and ungratefully participated her sentiments.

I had no doubt of the sincerity of Victoire's attachment to me, nor did I ever put *her* friendship in competition with that of the English boarder; neither had I yet felt the reproaches of my own conscience: but I was blind to the danger, and sensible only to the pleasure of seeing, and conversing with an amiable person, whose attention I did not wish to share, even with Victoire; there was however no avoiding her company, she hung in her usual familiar manner on my arm, estimating the integrity of *my* heart, exactly by her *own*; and conscious of no concealments herself, suspected none in me; we continued together till the bell rang, and as we returned without separating, our boarder had no opportunity of speaking to me alone, as I saw Victoire was a restraint on her.

Just after vespers, Miss Mountague was summoned to the grate, and to my extreme mortification received her friends alone.

My chagrin at this trifling incident, is inconceivable; I had begun a work basket, which I meant to present to my agreeable country-
woman—

woman—but my senses were so entirely deranged by this illusory sight, that unknowing what I did, I was beginning to take it to pieces.

Victoire snatched it from me, what are you thinking of, Agnes? said she, in amazement, you have begun the prettiest piece of work in the world, and are going to destroy it, before it is finished; why would you remove the flowers?

I had again recourse to my head-ach, and walked into the garden, leaving her to arrange the ornament on the basket.

The moment I was alone, I burst into tears, and in that situation was overtaken by Miss Moun-
tague; fancying myself slighted by her, I endeavoured to conceal my vexation.

You are always, said she, so cemented to the side of Victoire, there is no speaking to you, poor Mrs. Douglas, added she, in a fretful tone, was really grieved at not seeing you; there is no expressing the friendship she has conceived for you, read, extending towards me a rich pocket-book, how tenderly she laments your absence.

I have before said, my dear brother, I had not the remotest suspicion of any intrigue, or intended imposition in those people, yet I involuntarily started back.

Nay, said she, putting the book coldly in her pocket, if it be so, if you will not suffer any one to love you but sister Victoire, I shall inform Mrs. Douglas.

Cruel, I answered, I esteem Mrs. Douglas above, I had almost said, above all women; but that would be an injury to Victoire.

To say nothing of me, interrupted she, archly.

Well, said I, I am too ingenuous to talk to you, but Mrs. Douglas is the most pleasing per-

son I have seen; and to own the truth, I was not pleased you did not invite me to the grate to-day when I knew she was there.

How could I, said she, eagerly, without Victoire?

I started, I had, it is true, some fears that Victoire would so far eclipse my poor charms, both of person, and mind, as to attract the regard, I desired to engross to myself—but I did not comprehend how the same motive should operate on Miss Mountague, and I had yet generosity enough to be offended, at the implied indignity, offered my friend.

It is paying no compliment to the penetration of your friends, Miss Mountague, replied I, gravely, to suppose they would not be pleased with so engaging a creature as Victoire; if Mrs. Douglas is really as good, and sensible as she appears, it is only necessary Victoire should be presented to her; love, and esteem will certainly follow—but how is it, my dear, you have taken a dislike to a woman, who is a pattern of piety, politeness, and good-humour?

Me! cried Miss Mountague, I protest I have taken no dislike to her; I only think her a great deal too good, to be entrusted with *all* my mad secrets: but come, Agnes, we talk *at* rather than *to* each other; will you read what poor Douglas has written in the pocket-book? or shall I seal it up, and invite Victoire to our next conference?

Doomed to inevitable destruction, I not only opened the pocket-book, but by consenting to accompany her to the grate without Victoire, I deprived myself of the benefit of her wise observations, and the guard *her* prudence, would have placed over *my* folly.

On

On opening the book, I found a few lines written, which I here copy for your perusal; you will see, my dearest Moncrafts, some of the arts made use of to destroy your sister, ah, me! how painful is recollection.

Written in the pocket-book.

There was a time, charming lady Agnes, when I believed it impossible I could enter the walls of a convent with pleasure; but you my sweet unfortunate Scot are the unconscious magnet of my attraction; where you are is to Douglas an elysium; how my heart throbbed when the bell summoned our friend to the grate this morning; and how, ceasing to respire, I felt the disappointment, thou dear insensible, canst not conceive: will you not, once more, condescend to see the fondest, warmest of friends? shall I never more, except it be at her devotion, hear the voice of my amiable countrywoman? *is* Lady Agnes Moncrafts insensible? *can* she be ungrateful?

I will suppose you have read the billet, you see, brother, artful as was the style, had I not been so very an innocent, it would have alarmed me.

The next day our visitors were announced; ah! madam, said Mrs. Douglas, is this real, or is it an illusion of my senses? do I again behold you? are my fond eyes once more blest with the sight of that heavenly face? then kissing her hand, she extended it with an air of frank invitation to the grate.

I was weak enough to return the compliment, and my fingers were pressed by a hand which shook so violently, I was quite terrified; but what became of me when, on looking earnestly through
the

the black gauze veil, which but half exposed the face of the pretended Mrs. Douglas, I saw her drop on her knees; and in a faltering trembling accent, declare the impossibility of longer imposing on me: charming Agnes, continued the impostor, do not destroy me with thy frowns; behold at thy feet the most miserable of wretches; no woman, but a lover, a fond, despairing lover; one who knows not hope, who is lost to all the joys of life, but who, if thou art inexorable to his prayers, who, if thou wilt not pardon, alas! thou canst not reward, will shew thee he at least can die—die, Reuben! how glibly do the vain talkers speak of death.

I can give you no description of my fright, and consternation; I suppose I need not now say, the other was also a counterfeit lady.

Mr. Marshall the lover of Miss Mountague, fertile in contrivance had laid the scheme; and foreseeing that if his visits to the convent were often repeated, a nun would be appointed to attend them, he engaged his friend in order to entertain the expected spy, to accompany him; the discovery of their sex was premature, it was not intended to take place 'till after she left the convent.

Mr. Marshall swore he was undone—Miss Mountague declared she was ruined, Douglas was yet kneeling hardly presuming to look up, but still earnestly imploring compassion and forgiveness--while I stood aghast, viewing each by turns as they spoke, with visible marks of horror, and amazement; unable to form for some minutes any kind of judgment, of the meaning, or intention of either party.

Presently, however, that is to say, as soon as
my

my scattered ideas began to be collected; the whole transaction, with the sense of my own imprudent conduct, rushed at once on my mind; and I felt such real compunction for *my* part in it, that overwhelmed with shame, and terror, I should certainly have fainted, had not Miss Mountague prudently dismissed the gentlemen, and led me to her room—this presence of mind prevented her secret from being discovered, for Victoire was just gone to my cell, and had I seen her, while I was so dreadfully agitated, I should most certainly have told her all: oh! would to God I had—what guilt and misery had I not then escaped.

Miss Mountague threw herself at my feet, she implored my pity; if Mr. Marshall's visits at the grate were now discovered, her brother would remove her to some more strict convent—and perhaps, for what would not resentment aided by money effect, shut her up for life; she should be miserable—deprived of the man she loved—what was life to her, but a prolongation of wretchedness?—answer, added she, Agnes, to the God you serve, for the sin my desperation may plunge me into—on the contrary, if you kindly consent to keep my secret, one month—one little month—puts me in possession of my fortune, and renders me mistress of my actions; the consul is too well acquainted with the laws of our country, to lend his sanction to my confinement, here after that period—dear Agnes! you have my life in your hands—for pity's sake, then—

Thus persuaded, blandished, and threatened; I at last promised not to reveal what had happened—no, not to Victoire; on condition that the pretended Mrs. Douglas was not again admitted.

Oh!

Oh! my brother—if there is a female whose honor, and whose peace is dear to you; preserve, carefully guard her from the unapprehended, and therefore more to be feared danger of corruption from her own sex; without the aid of vicious or inconsiderate woman, the arts of man would be essayed in vain; oh! that my experience had not rendered *me* thus wise; trace the origin of female ruin, to its first source, in all situations and degrees of life, and you will in general find it, in the art or folly of their own sex.

Had I stopped here, had I, though in the participation of the guilty secret, withdrawn myself from her further concerns, I might have saved my soul from actual sin; for let me confess with blushes, that even *now*, crimson o'er my pallid cheek, the impression made on my heart, by the impostor, was indelible as sudden; and considering his disguise, unaccountable; but to those, who knew the specious dissembler, it will not appear strange, that *he* whose fine person, and finer sense, had always been employed in the art of seduction, should win the heart of an *innocent* like your *poor sister*; his manners so delicate, so insinuating, his voice, oh! let me fly the recollection, lest even *now*, my soul rebel against the mercy of my God—he was formed for my undoing, his looks, tender, expressive, and respectful; stole into my heart, that heart where deceit, and disguise were equal strangers; for never till *his* fatal image took possession there, did it harbour one thought which ought to be concealed.

Miss Mountague, cheerfully complied with my condition; she was the next morning summoned to the grate, and I saw her return with swollen eyes, and dejected mein; she looked at me in
mournful

mournful silence, as she passed me in the garden—but though I was alone did not speak.

Fool, that I was! I feared some terrible event, the constraint I imposed on myself, in not accompanying her to the grate, had cost me very dear, I was on the rack to know all that passed.

I had indeed resolved never to *see* the fictitious Mrs. Douglas more: *that* was a sacrifice the duties of religion, and the laws of prudence demanded; but did their severity extend to the prohibition of *bearing* of a person, who was in my fond opinion one of the first beings in the creation? it was my misfortune to have known the charming man, but was not that misfortune reciprocal? he had not injured me, and it was not possible knowing the religious order to which I belonged, he could harbour any intentions inimical, either to my peace, or the vow I had taken; why then, secure in my faith, and conscious of the rectitude of my heart; should I deprive myself of the pleasure it gave me, to speak of an amiable man, for whom I might preserve an holy friendship, without injury to honor, or religion?

These were the weak, the fallacious arguments that occurred to me, as I took the circle of our charming garden: fatal sophistry! oh! never let woman trust to the false reasoning of a heart, where passion has once entered; true reason has no residence with love; in the tumult of a fond attachment her voice is not heard, her influence is totally lost, and she is by degrees wholly expelled: yet ingenuous to deceive itself, how many plausible excuses will the mind not admit, and flattering its own weakness, miscall the ruinous folly by the name of reason. But reason, though she appears quietly to retire, and patiently to see
her

her throne usurped—when fell destruction has ravaged the devoted victim, *returns in triumph*, and supported by conscience, strips the veil that obscured her enemies, and speaks in thunder to the sad despairing soul—oh! brother, *thus did I* deal with my better sense, and *thus am I* repaid.

I again met Miss Mountague, who again passed me in silence.

No longer able to conceal my anxiety, or repress my curiosity, when we met again, I hesitatingly accosted her; hoped no ill news occasioned the sadness of her looks, and ashamed of my own folly, sought to hide the confusion in my countenance, by affecting to gather some flowers, while I asked, if her *friends* were well.

She answered not, but dropped a billet at my feet, and hastily quitted the parterre.

Unhappily, our superior was that instant coming down the walk, accompanied by Victoire, and her mother; the Marchioness, and her son's bride, Madame St. Lawrens, were come to visit my friend, and hearing I was in the garden, were seeking me.

What in this ill-fated moment could I do? the billet lay at my feet, conscience bid me avoid the temptation, wretch that I was; I rejected its admonition.

If I leave it, thought I, the lady Abbess will certainly see it; the contents perhaps will lead to explanations that may ruin poor Mountague, and raise suspicions of me, that would render my future life uneasy; they might even affect the innocent Victoire.

Our superior was a woman of high birth, and haughty spirit, austere in her manner, severe in her principles, and strict in her devotion: she

was,

was, nevertheless, extremely open to suspicion, she viewed the actions, and penetrated the designs of her first favorites, with a mistrustful, and cautious observance, and being in her own conduct, an example of rigid propriety, censured without mercy, every error she detected in her little community; she still drew nearer to the place where I yet stood, the guilty billet before me; in an evil moment I took it up, alas! to avoid a temporary mortification, I embraced eternal ruin.

B I L L E T.

How shall I support my trembling limbs from the convent, should not the object of my adoration deign to hear me? But let me not think it, what thou soft apprehensive charmer, canst thou fear? art thou not guarded, secure, beyond the reach of violence? art thou not inaccessible even to hope? oh! let thy religion, sweet devotee, teach thee mercy; my eternal welfare is in thy keeping; wilt thou not save an immortal soul? let me not depart unblest with thy sight, to look on thee, to hear thee, is all I can ask, or thou bestow; I kneel to thy compassion, once, once more, heavenly nun, once more bless thy Douglas.

You have read the incoherent scrawl. How Moncrass, now that I see the poor contrivance which undid me, dare I hope you will forgive me, for what followed?

The next day Miss Mountague grown bold by success, left a second billet in my cell, even at the foot of the crucifix; and on the succeeding one, a third, more extravagant than either.

I for-

I forbear to insult your good understanding, and solid judgment, with their contents; yet, such as they were, they compleated my destruction: long did I dwell in rapture on every line, and implicitly believe the false vows they contained; but it is also long since they have arose in terrible array to punish, and to condemn me; years of penitence have not obliterated the sinful folly from my memory—No! it rises with agonising minuteness, and now fills *that* space with *terror* and *regret*, which *then* glowed with *transport*; I sicken at the recollection and tremble to think, by what progressive villany, that man became the object of my adoration.

Let me not dwell on the hateful particulars; you perceive my fate, I consented to another interview; one only was asked, but another, and another succeeded. What was there in tenderness, in eloquence, in art that was not essayed for my ruin? How often was the sacred Creator of the world, invoked to witness the blackest perjury? What tears were not shed? What anguish feigned? alas! alas! how could I, young, unhackneyed in deceit, and naturally open in my temper, how could I dread danger from vices, which I did not believe existed, among the venial sins, of a degenerate world? Like the innocent lamb, who meets the murderous knife with its offered throat, and fearless of the mortal stab, only bleat from the anguish of the death wound, I fondly believed all my destroyer's vows, shared his regret at my situation, and mourned in real agony the irrevocable vow I had taken; not merely because it was an eternal barrier betwixt me, and the man I adored; but because it inflicted misery on him.

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We continued to meet at the grate without suspicion, Miss Mountague was a perfect Argus, but Victoire was too wise, and too virtuous to be trusted with a secret on which my salvation was staked.

What have I done to you, Agnes? she would say, how have I lost your friendship? you avoid me, yes, Agnes, you fly my society, you no longer accompany me to the altar of God, even the path to heaven becomes less desirable to Agnes because her Victoire would tread it with her, how am *I*, or how are *you* changed? my sister, my friend, it is not only Victoire you discard, what is become of that chearful serenity, which used to gild your tranquil days and gave the peace of righteousness to your nights? Oh! Agnes, you have expelled from your heart, friendship, and content; what are the guests you have admitted in their place? your new favorite the English boarder, has perhaps been giving you sketches of the world, drawn by her lively pencil, and you regret you are not an inhabitant of the place she paints in such glowing colours; be not deceived, my friend, she is herself yet ignorant of the many storms she must encounter; *here* sister Agnes our task is easy, our existence delightful; we live to the glory of the king of kings—we are happy here, we shall be blessed hereafter: how extatic the heavenly enjoyments we are promised, on earth we are free from care, and we shall be received in heaven as the handmaids of our Redeemer; this, Agnes, is the reward of our pure, our inoffensive lives, return, dear sister, to Victoire—to God.

Alas! Victoire! what painful sensations did thy gentle pleadings create; how often did I
throw

throw myself on thy bosom, that faithful seat of holy love, how often has it been wet with my tears—but I was lost, past redemption lost; and instant death, for then the voice of conscience was not heard, would have been less terrible to me, then the deprivation of his sight, on whom my soul hung—and in whom I implicitly confided.

The account he gave of himself, which was also corroborated by Mr. Marshal, was; that he was a younger branch of the house of Douglas, that his father's attachment to the Stuarts had involved his family in the general calamity, which had exterminated mine; his income was a small pension, which however would, if shared with me, be luxury, oh! could he find means to take me from the hated convent.

You tremble, you feel a momentary horror at the apostacy of your sister, you are filled with terror for her lost soul: ah! brother! all was indeed lost; I was eagerly bent on my own destruction, the convent was become hateful to me, it was the sepulchre of my lover's hope; the holy sisterhood, what was their piety to me? were they adored by a Douglas, did they love *like me*, would they not, *like me* languish for freedom? *like me* detest the returning light which shone on my captivity? would they not pine in joyless bondage, and waste the sad hours in vain wishes to escape to the arms of so amiable a lover?

Miss Mountague judged rightly of the disposition of her friends; she was now within a few days of being at age; her brother, too much enraged hitherto to see her, now desired to talk to her in the presence of our superior: it should be, he engaged, the last effort he would make to save her from marrying a professed libertine; he desired the

the two young nuns, her friends, might also be present ; he hoped from their known good sense, he should in them find advocates to support his arguments.

Our superior, whose understanding was, at least, in high estimation with herself, was always gratified, when appealed to, in matters where her judgment was the ultimate decision ; and though in the case of Miss Mountague, that was not premised, yet she flattered herself, she should either persuade the young lady, to yield to the remonstrances of her brother, or convince him, his opposition to his sister's inclination was unreasonable ; not a little pleased indeed was the good lady, at the compliment Captain Mountague paid her judgment.

Now, said my lover, if ever you escape this dreadful place, Agnes, it must be on the day this conference is held.

I believed it impossible, but added my wish to his, that it were not.

On my knees, Agnes, cried he, in the utmost agitation, let me prevail on you, to be guided by your Douglas ; be confident, and nothing can prevent our success ; Miss Mountague you well know, will not sacrifice her love for Marshall to her brother's whim ; the consequence will be, his declining any further intercourse with her ; she will then be released from her confinement, and received to the protection of her relation the consul's lady ; when she is gone, think, Agnes, how shall we ever meet more, and can you for ever give up the man, who lives but in you ? for me, I swear by the Almighty God, the moment you are shut from my sight, shall be my last, *here* if you refuse to join your endeavours

vours with mine, to escape from this worse than prison, my lifeless body shall greet your eyes—your cruel eyes—therefore weep not, but resolve—*now, this very now* is the crisis of our fate, you either give yourself to Douglas, you consent to fly with him, you live in the care of his heart, in the bosom of his love, or you sentence him to die, by his own despairing hand.

The trembling eagerness of him, who too well knew, how inestimable to me, was the life he threatened to end; the big drops of sweat which stood on his bent brow, his eyes raised to heaven, while he made the horrid vow of suicide, all combined to terrify, and persuade; almost insensible with fear, I promised that nothing but death should prevent my following his instructions.

Our superiour had an apartment within her parlour, she called her auditory; thither she usually summoned the old nuns on any public occasion, and there also she entertained our bishop, and made her own confessions; it was furnished with books, &c. in a superiour style to the parlour, and she resolved to hear Captain Mountague's conference with his sister, and give her judgment thereon in this private apartment; there were two doors to it, one of which opened into our hall, the other into the outer parlour; my lover was acquainted with every particular, he had laid his plan with the utmost caution and deliberation.

Captain Mountague was a little fair man, so delicately formed, that he was called by the young Englishmen, chicken Mountague.

As Miss Mountague's intention of quitting the convent was known, the restraint she was first under relaxed; all her letters and messages were delivered

delivered to her, and the consul's lady informed her, she had ordered some cloaths, which she intended to present to her, on the day of her coming of age.

On this pretence, a box was sent to the convent, by means of that lady's woman, in which among other things, was a parcel sealed, and addressed to me; containing a suit of Captain Mountague's scarlet cloaths, the colour he usually wore.

The evening before the conference, Douglas advised me to feign indisposition, the deceit was spared me, I was really very ill, my dear Victoire passed the night in my cell, ah! what a night—how did my heart reproach me for my duplicity to my true friend, she prayed for her Agnes, but even the prayers of that righteous woman were ineffective, I had deserted my God and he now abandoned *me*. But though dead to religion, gratitude, and friendship had not lost all influence, my Victoire yet remembers how often and how ardently I embraced her—how—almost speechless with agony I besought her to pray for—to pity the *lost* Agnes.

Her amazement at this expression is not to be conceived, how? lost? my sister! my friend! said she, ah! thou art very ill, thy senses are not right, compose thyself, thou art not lost—God will restore thee.

Never, never, cried I weeping, and at that moment I was on the point of confessing my hidden sin, when the bleeding corpse of Douglas appeared to my imagination, at the grate where he swore it should lay if my escape was prevented; I shrieked, Victoire was terrified, she embraced me, implored me to be comforted, to rely on
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the intercession of the virgin, she again prayed for me, and thus passed this horrible night.

At last day approached, when the bells rung to early prayers; the nuns as they passed to chapel all enquired after my health.

Ah! said Victoire, weeping, pray for her, she is indeed much indisposed.

Let me relieve you, sister, said a friendly nun, I will watch with Agnes.

No, answered my friend, she seems now more composed, I will remain with her 'till day, if God sees fit to continue her sickness, you shall watch with her to night.

I now began to tremble, least the officious zeal of the sisterhood, should prevent my going out of my cell; I therefore affected to be sleepy, and assuring Victoire that I felt myself much better, prevailed on her to leave me; her piety only induced her to comply with my entreaties, she would go, she said, to morning vespers, and pray for her Agnes; I embraced her, I could not restrain my tears, again and again I threw myself on her faithful bosom—softened and surprised, she left me with extreme reluctance—I entreated she would take some rest on her return from chapel, reminded her of the conference, and begged she would make my excuses for not attending; go best of women, said I, pulling my veil over my eyes, which were drowned in tears; the benediction of the saints, and angels follow thee, if I should rise before your return, I will wait for you in the garden.

As soon as she was gone, I wrapped my gown round me, and taking the bundle under my arm, passed the hall into the superior's auditory, which being opened to be aired, I easily found my way through,

through, into the outer parlour, and there entered the light closet which bolted on the inside, and put on the man's apparel. The abbess and all the nuns were gone to vespers; and I waited with incredible patience and resolution, two hours in this place before the ringing of the bell announced the expected visitor.——I heard him pass the closet door, with what trepidation may be imagined, I heard the wheel turn, and the portress return to her station.

Miss Mountague had received particular instructions for her conduct; she knew my attachment to Douglas, and how passionately he wished me to be freed from my vows; but as the thing appeared to her totally impossible, and as she was of a very volatile disposition, it never entered her head that such a plan was intended to be carried into execution by her means without acquainting her with it. But as high spirits are generally soonest affected, Mr. Douglas feared, were she to know the importance *to us* of every minute she passed in the auditory, her anxiety might defeat the very purpose, we were sure she would not fail to forward, all in her power.

Her instructions, which she punctually adhered to, were to commence the conversation in terms, that should enrage her brother; who was a very choleric young man; when it was supposed he would break up the conference in a rage; she was then to affect sudden humility, and by that means, pacify his anger, and recommence the subject of her attachment to her lover, with such mildness, as should give Mr. Mountague hopes of prevailing on her to accede to his will.

Every thing happened exactly as Douglas expected.

In the first emotions of anger, Mr. Mountague

was leaving the auditory ; the abbess rang her bell to give the portress notice to open the gate, the removal of the seats contributed to the deception, and in that instant I stepped out of the closet ; the portress was hastening with her back towards me to the gate, I found myself in the street deprived of every sense of recollection.

Mr. Douglas was waiting, he received me with transport ; Captain, said he, taking me by the arm, you have been detained ; then softly, if you love your Douglas, resume your presence of mind, it is too late to retract.

I looked round, the gate of the convent was closed, my very soul died within me.

Come on, my love, remember it is your Douglas, that implores you—take courage—the rest of my plan is as well laid as this ; we are both lost if we are re-taken, if we get clear from hence my life shall be devoted to my Agnes.

His voice reanimated me, I knew the danger we were in, and used my utmost endeavours to keep pace with his wishes ; we passed the streets with celerity, and happily without observation, we left the city, and reached the sea shore.

Here Agnes, said Douglas, supporting my tottering steps into a natural cavity in a rock, this must be our dwelling 'till our friend gives us the signal of safety and escape.

The precautions he had taken to prevent my suffering any inconvenience, or taking cold in this place by being exposed to the weather, was a proof of his affection ; he had spread a quantity of mats on the floor, if the bottom of the rock, which was covered with shells, could be so called, and over them, as well as on a seat he had made, was spread a rich carpet ; he had also provided large fur cloaks to fence me from the cold,

cold, there were besides baskets of the best provisions, some wine and fresh water.

When night advanced, notwithstanding the most tender and delicate assiduities of my lover, I could not suppress the terror my situation raised in my mind.

We were not above a league from my deserted convent, where if I was retaken, a dreadful death was the inevitable punishment of my apostacy ; the roaring of the sea, which as the darkness increased, beat dreadfully over our rock ; the wind which blew a perfect hurricane ; and lastly, the being in such a place, solely accompanied by and in the power of a man, to whom I was not yet married ; were all circumstances, which might singly subdue the fortitude of a stronger mind than mine ; what therefore must be my terror, under their accumulated weight ?

Yet let me here, for alas ! such occasions will too soon cease, do justice to the honor, and delicacy, of my lover's behaviour, during this *more* dreadful night, than the *last* which I had passed in the convent.

It is impossible to conceive any thing, more elegantly tender, than his whole deportment ; he wept as he supported my fainting body, and when I recovered, cheered my sinking spirits, with the most encouraging protestations of inviolable love, and honor ; he endeavoured to inspire me with courage, by assurance of our perfect safety, which could no other way be secured.

For consider, my soul, thou treasure of thy Douglas, said he, pressing my cold hands to his breast, the power, policy and intelligence of our enemies ; we have not only the civil power to evade, but the whole Romish church are our inveterate foes.

Oh! thou blessed virgin! thou knowest how deep that dreadful truth sunk into my soul; what, cried I, almost frantic, the holy church? the pious bishop, the good sisterhood, Victoire, are you all the foes of the lost Agnes? let me return, let me expiate with my life for my offences; let me be again received into the blessed pale, I have so wickedly deserted.

Agnes, said my lover, falling at my feet, forbear to stab with thy words, the man who adores thee; if thou hast an atom of love for thy Douglas, forbear to wound him with thy unavailing regret; if indeed, continued he, trembling, thou would'st leave me, conceal from me the hateful truth, lest it should rob me of the courage necessary to protect and support thee; if Agnes no longer loves her Douglas, what is life to him?

The agitation he was in during this speech, recalled me to a sense of what was due to a man, who had ventured so much in my escape; whom I loved with unutterable tenderness, and to whose honor, I had so unreservedly committed myself; I became more composed and listened to his soothing voice, 'till worn out with fatigue, I dropt asleep in his arms.

I awoke much refreshed, and found he had gently laid me on the seat which was formed, doubtless for that purpose, and having covered me with the cloaks, had laid himself down at my feet, and slept likewise.

It was full day when we awoke, the sea had retreated from the rock, the wind was hushed, and the beams of the sun penetrated our shelter; all was silent around, and my lover advised our conversation to be in whispers; for, said he, I know if it had not been attended with great danger

ger, Marshall would have furnished us with means to leave the coast.

This day appeared less tedious than the former; it was passed in the most delightful anticipations of the happiness we should enjoy in Switzerland; whither my lover intended to carry me; and as my confidence in him, increased every moment, I became less uneasy in the uncomfortable recess, which by degrees lost its horrors; as my love strengthened for Douglas, my regrets at the sinful step I had taken, insensibly lessened, 'till it was no longer remembered.

The second night passed as the first, with increase of confidence on my side, of love and respect on his, and still we heard nothing of Marshall; we were beginning to lay plans for our future existence, and terrified into a belief, that our friends were involved in our distress, when the sea again beating over our rock, I started, ah! Douglas, we are betrayed, I am certain I heard the sound of voices.

He eagerly climbed up the back part of the cavity, come, my Agnes, cried he, here are our friends, we have not a moment to lose; and he carried me in his arms to the open beach, where a person muffled in a cloak, who I found to be Captain Marshall, and a large boat with six men waited.

How are my friends? said I, you have no time for enquiries, replied he, adieu, and adieu, as he put a letter into the hands of Douglas, was all we had time to say.

We embarked and presently lost sight of the shore; not a word was interchanged, the men rowed as if their own lives depended on their expedition, and by the time day broke, we were

entirely out of the sight of land—a ship, which appeared at a vast distance was the object our men seemed to have in view, and we reached her about noon.

In the mean while, the letter Marshall put into my lover's hand excited my most lively curiosity; I reminded him of it, and he gave it me to peruse.

The contents will ever be engraved on my mind:—my flight from the convent was not discovered 'till evening; Victoire had vainly sought me, after the conference, which ended much to the displeasure of our superior, as she did not find people, who were not dependant on her favour, quite so partial to her opinion, as those who were—she had searched the garden, the chapel, and every where but Miss Mountague's apartment, where it at last occurred to her, I might be; she therefore abandoned any further pursuit, 'till evening vesper, when not meeting me at a part of my devotion I had never before missed; and Miss Mountague declaring she had not seen me, my poor friend ran distracted to the superior, to beg the pond might be dragged, as she feared from my delirium, and despondency the last night, some dreadful catastrophe.

Her request was complied with, but no information was gained, nor any suspicion of my elopement, 'till one of the lay-servants found my wrapper, and shoes in the closet.

It had happened, that the portress who let me out, was suddenly seized with a dizziness she was accustomed to in her head; and was obliged to quit her station, which was then filled by one of the women belonging to the kitchen; who on being personally directed by the abbess had let Mr. Mountague out.

It was in vain the portress on her recovery, and being told this circumstance, protested she had before opened the gate for Mr. Mountague; all she said, was believed to proceed from the disorder in her head, and treated accordingly; 'till the wrapper, and shoes led to a suspicion, that something more than the wanderings of a disordered imagination was the source of her exclamations.

The affair was directly carried to the inquisition, who issued their warrant for bringing Mr. and Miss Mountague before them; the consul appealed from their power to the king; who was pleased to order those young people to remain unmolested.

Victoire was next sent for, but her protectors were still more powerful, as she was daughter to the French ambassador.

The judges of the inquisition and the priests were the more enraged, as they were thus prevented from convicting the supposed accomplices; and had set every possible engine to work, to discover the culprits; my visits, added Marshall, at the convent are suspended, but I receive invitations highly flattering to my hopes from the consul.

The vessel on board which you will be received, as an English traveller and his tutor, is bound to Ancona, but will land you on the shore of Barbary, which coast I have informed the captain the young gentleman has a desire to visit; I added, he had lost his passage from Lisbon in an English frigate, by going too far into the country, when she was under sailing orders; you will be set on shore as agreed, from whence I advise you to use all possible expedition 'till you get out of the power of the church of Rome.

This was the substance of Mr. Marshall's letter; and it was too late to object to his plan, had we been so inclined; we reached the vessel and rewarded our pilots, but were yet far from being at ease; for the captain, notwithstanding his agreement, insisted on touching first at Ancona, from whence he intended to freight for the Barbary shore.

Thus remaining still in the jurisdiction of his holiness, we were under constant apprehensions; nevertheless Douglas, at all risks procured a travelling priest, to give us the nuptial benediction as soon as we arrived at Ancona; from whence fortunately we procured a passage on board a Danish merchant ship to Elfsineur.

I must not omit to inform you, that Mr. Douglas accounted for my disguise to the priest who married us, by saying I was an English lady who had fled from my friends, to escape a persecution on account of my religion.

If you consider, my dear brother, the pains this man had taken to get me into his power, the restraint his respectful behaviour must have laid on his libertine nature, and the danger he had exposed himself to, you will conclude his joy at the grand completion of his scheme was great; it was indeed unbounded, and his wife became still dearer, than the Agnes Moncrasfs, who had exposed herself to so many hazards in following him.

We had after our landing at Elfsineur, still a long journey to take, before we reached the spot of our destination; but my husband's courage, and perseverance overcame all difficulties, and we were happily settled in a beautiful villa on the bank of the lake of Geneva, when I had advanced

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ed too far in my pregnancy to have encountered any further fatigue.

And this, brother, was the most happy period of my life, oh ! it was more than so, it was a continued scene of rapture ; the tenderness of my husband, was an inexhaustible source of bliss to me, it was the sweet oblivion in which all memory of the past, and all fears for the future were lost ; it lulled my conscience, it soothed my cares, and was the tower of strength on which my hope rested ; I loved, I adored him, yet would he often dispute pre-eminence with me, on the fond excess of the passion we felt for each other ; but ah ! how transitory, how short lived was this pleasing calm.

The duke of —, who was our neighbour, took a particular liking to my husband, and continually invited him to his parties ; but my situation was the apology, he offered for declining any, except hunting, which, as he was very fond of the sport, he accepted.

The very first time he partook of his favorite diversion, he was brought home, having in his fall from a vicious horse, received two fractures in his leg, and dislocated his collar-bone ; and he was otherwise so much bruised, his life was in the most imminent danger.

All recollection of my sufferings at the sight, was obliterated by a total deprivation of my senses ? my child's life was lost, and mine also despaired of — my husband recovered enough to be informed of my situation, without danger to himself, before I was restored to my senses. The measure of my iniquities was not yet full, I had not yet suffered the punishment due to the enormity of my offences, the blow was yet to come

which, I humbly trust, will at the last great account be received in extenuation, I was yet spared to be numbered among the living.

My recovery was slow and doubtful, the distressful solicitude of my husband is not to be expressed; he was himself very weak, and his constant anxiety for me, preyed on his spirits, impaired his constitution, and retarded the cure of his hurts.

His danger roused me from the stupor the fever had left on my nerves; but my husband was so enervated, and the fever on his spirits continued to increase so fast, our physicians advised, as the dernier resort, the air of Montpellier—he was himself alarmed at a prognostic so terrible, and fell into a profound melancholy, from which I exerted my utmost power to relieve him—but in vain.

We took the road to Montpellier, my heart breaking over my drooping husband, whose soul appalled by fear of death, shrunk in terror from the impending blow; and terrified at the phantoms of his own conscience, was not one moment satisfied, but when he knew I watched him; I was not only his nurse, but his waking guard.

It was in those sad hours which I passed by the bed of the man I adored, trembling at every sigh, and harrowed by every groan, that conscience first awoke my mind to reflections, forgotten in the reciprocal enjoyment of connubial love; I trembled lest the curses denounced against me by the holy church were now beginning to operate, and thought I foresaw in the loss of my beloved husband, the just vengeance due to my broken vow.

It was indeed beginning, but that had been
mercy,

mercy, even his death, had he breathed his last in my arms, would have been a misery, far short of what I was doomed to suffer.

He still continued to grow worse; one night when I had been offering my weeping oraisons to heaven for his recovery, when I had been imploring the Almighty to spare him, yet a little longer. With folded hands, and streaming eyes, he suddenly besought me to pardon him.

I can neither *live* nor *die*, said he, without confessing how I have *injured* the best of women!

Alas! I replied, you have not injured *me*; supposing he alluded to my leaving the convent, *my own heart* misled me, not my Douglas; let not that sin rest on *thy mind*, it is *me*, who am the delinquent, who ought to feel repentance, and suffer for my offence.

Mistaken angel! answered he, gasping for breath, and dost thou think it is the cursed priestcraft of thy vow, that haunts my mind? do not shudder, it is not yet time, when thou shalt know how I have abused thy unsuspecting nature, when thou hearest me confess, that had I died when I had that fall from my horse, which will I fear, at last destroy me; thou, *thou* my virtuous Agnes, and thy child, had it survived, would have been beggars, without *home, friends, fortune, or character*.

Heavenly powers! answered I, what is it you say, is this a delirium, or what fatal mystery are you about to unravel? we might have been homeless, and what wretches who are so can boast of friends? we might have been destitute of support, but surely the hard world would have left me a widow's right to weep, without wounding my fame.—

No,

No, said he, with violence, it would not, for know thou hast no husband, no such being as — Douglas, is in existence, I am an impostor, I have deceived thee. — Now then Agnes, do not curse, but forgive me, and take the only amends in my power to offer.

What he further uttered, I know not, I fell lifeless on the bed by his side; he wept, tore his hair, and raved; called for a clergyman, a *protestant* clergyman.

The servant, whom we had brought with us from Geneva, frightened at his violence, actually ran to the house of an English nobleman, whose family was then at Montpellier, on account of his ill health, who had in their suite a domestic chaplain; him she intreated to come to her master, who was dying, and it was not 'till her return on opening the curtains she discovered my situation.

The good clergyman assisted in my recovery, and in calming the transports of my husband; who without adverting to my vow, or hinting at my elopement from the convent, made the same confession to him, he had before done to me; and implored him to prevail on me to forgive, and receive him *now* as my legal husband; which would, at least, secure to me and mine the protection of his family.

How my soul rose at the deceit practised on my unsuspecting heart, how I detested the impostor one moment, and adored him the next; how often my rejection threw him into despair, from which my frantic tenderness relieved him; you, my brother, who have felt the various excesses of the passion which has ruined your sister, may perhaps, though but imperfectly conceive; let me
then

then hasten to say, that to the reasoning of the divine, and the entreaties of my husband, was added a tender pleader, more interested in the event than myself; I was a second time pregnant, and at length consented to become, according to the rites of the protestant church, the wife of *James Neville*, an Englishman of good family, and as it afterwards proved, heir to large estates in Gloucestershire.

I have already, my dear brother, far exceeded the limits of an epistolary correspondent; but these letters are from the dead; the heart that indites, will cease to throb; the hand that writes, to tremble; life's fitful fever will be past, before you receive them; and all that remains of your once loved sister, will be the daughter of the barbarous man, who ruined her eternal peace, and abandoned her to sorrow, to want, and to the gnawings of the worm which never dies. But I will now close this first packet, lest a confusion should arise to give the best of brothers, one trouble that can be avoided, in the arrangement of the many sheets which will be filled with the sad story, and blotted with the tears of

AGNES NEVILLE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIV.

St. Clare's posthumous Letter continued.

IT seemed as if revealing his guilty secret was the only thing wanting to recover Mr. Neville ; his health and spirits returned with additional lustre ; he called me the saviour of his soul and body, and Mr. Dormer, (who was the only person present at our marriage, besides one witness *he* procured on whose prudence he said he could rely), often heard the grateful and tender effusions of a heart, now more endeared to me than ever.

Apprehending that our change of name would excite curiosity, and give occasion for impertinent enquiries ; we did not venture to be seen in public at Montpellier, where there then were many people Mr. Neville knew ; but left that place as soon as possible, and returned to Geneva, still as Mr. and Mrs. Douglas ; where we meant to dispose of our property, and remove to some distant part, either of Switzerland, or Germany (as we feared to venture on catholic ground) and there assume our real name ; for he confessed he had reasons, as cogent, as the fictitious ones he had before assigned, which prevented his going to England.

By the time we returned to our house, I was not in a situation to bear the fatigue of travelling ; and the continual agitation I had suffered rendered my husband tenderly apprehensive for my life ; quiet was certainly necessary, and that I now enjoyed in every sense.

Agnes

Agnes was born at this happy period; her father received her as the choicest gift of heaven, and how dear she has ever been to the heart of her fond mother, God only knows.

The little cherub was for some months very weakly, and we were in constant apprehension of losing her. The pleasing painful cares, which the sweet stranger brought into the world with her, added to our anxiety to *preserve* her, so occupied us; that we no longer thought of changing our residence; and knowing we could at any time assume our name, I became careless about the matter—I had my fond husband—my lovely child, a pleasant though humble home, where peace and plenty reigned—and what more could I have enjoyed, had I been dignified by the most splendid title?

My husband received his pension through a banker at Paris, who remitted it to him under his feigned name of Douglas; from this person he received an express, which though it gave him a momentary concern, filled him with transport; and oh! how he promised, and swore and how deceived!

A relation from whom he had expectations, was dead, and for us only he rejoiced, his wife should be the Lady Bountiful of his estates—his Agnes the heiress—and himself the happiest of men! He had some affairs to settle in England before he could remove us, but he would go and arrange them, and return to take us in triumph, to his family, and country.

He left us—the *cruel!* barbarous! the worse than savage!—left his fond adoring wife—his smiling infant, to grief! to anguish! to despair!

For

For the first two months I had letters from him every mail. But after that, it was no longer my *husband*—my *lover*—my *friend*! it was Douglas, the impostor, *Douglas*, for by that name he always signed his letters, and I from habit unhappily did the same.

I remonstrated on his cruel neglect—bemoaned my own hard fate, and entreated his pity to my unprotected state, his compassion for his child; with a like ill success. For some months he ceased to write at all, but at the end of the eighth he returned—

Yes—the inhuman returned—to impose afresh on my credulity.

The affair he hinted at, as preventing his residence in England, was again, he said, taken up by his enemies (who were people in power) with such acrimony, that he was not safe even in Geneva; now that they had *discovered* his retreat: he only ventured to come to me to settle the mode of sending my remittances; he must instantly return; if the disagreeable affair did not terminate to his advantage, heaven knew when he should see me again; two hundred pounds a year would be paid to my order as Agnes Douglas; and without one tender embrace, one look at his poor infant, he quitted our *now miserable* dwelling, with as much haste, as though he feared some dreadful contagion was in it.

The blow was so sudden, so unexpected, and so dreadful; that it threw me into a fever of the brain, from which it was three months before I recovered.

My little Agnes was thought to be dying, when returning reason bid me remember I was a *mother*; and maternal affection was roused at the sight

fight of my sick child ; who whether from neglect, or natural weakness, was not only ill, but her little limbs for want of exercise were swelled and contracted, and the fairy as we used to call her, (merely from her sprightliness and agility) was now in danger of becoming a cripple. This sight while it struck to my heart like the icy hand of death, called forth all my faculties ; and my sorrows were awhile suspended in the care of my lovely child ; whom it pleased heaven to restore, with all the bloom of healthful infancy, to her mother's prayer.

You will hardly be persuaded, brother, that so exceedingly simple was I, I actually believed the hasty tale my husband had left my credulity to digest ; and that all my senses after the recovery of my child, were absorbed in sorrow for him ; I was in constant expectation of his return, and even reproached myself for chiding him for his neglect.

Ah ! thought I, at the instant my letters were given to him, he might be overwhelmed with sorrow—do I know he is not now so ? was it for *me*, his fond *wife*, the *mother* of his *child*, to aggravate distress, it is *his* misfortune I am not permitted to alleviate ? he cannot abandon his wife and child ? no ; he is himself enduring the woes his absence inflicts on us.

Thus fondly flattering my hopes, and confiding in his honor, I passed two heavy years ; but at the end of the second, I was reduced to distress of another kind. My draft was protested. Monsieur Noverre, the banker who had hitherto paid my pension was dead, and the answer sent by his successor was—that Mr. Neville had closed his account with them.

I should

I should have before told you, that as the pension was paid to my husband by order of Lord Ruthven, I still thought it was to that nobleman's bounty, I owed the subsistence of myself and child: I was therefore not a little surprised, when I found Mr. Neville in his own name had negociated it with the banker; yet, loth still to give up my fond confidence in his principles, I hoped in spite of reason, that a little time would clear up this, and every other ambiguous circumstance, to the credit of *him*, whose *honor*, it was both my duty, and inclination to support.

In the country where we then lived, religion was so tolerated, it was difficult to say what was the established doctrine, most adhered to by the inhabitants. We had a Romish chapel, and a Lutheran church in our little village: the priest to whom I confessed, was a man of unaffected piety, fine sense and universal charity: my sweet Agnes, he used to call his playfellow, and seldom took his evening walk without her. To him, I opened my heart, when having lived another year on the credit my good neighbours gave me, and the sale of what trifling valuables I possessed; I found myself utterly destitute!

Father St. Jerome was the meek practiser of the virtues he taught, he joined with me in opinion, that my husband was more unfortunate than faulty.

Perhaps, said the good man, the nature of the distress in which he is involved, may oblige him to conceal himself; Lord Ruthven may have withdrawn his bounty, and your husband is ignorant of your situation. I have correspondents in England, and will cause enquiry to be made; in the mean while, I will be your almoner: the
generous

generous priest was as good as his word, but, oh! brother! how can I describe the anguish I was now fated to endure.

Father Jerome came one morning earlier than his accustomed hour. You have told me, Mrs. Douglas, said he, with unusual coldness, and gravity; that your husband and yourself assumed the name of Douglas for *family reasons*; you have made me the confidant of your distress; and I have been willing to approve myself your friend, are you at liberty, may I ask—to disclose those *reasons* to me?

The reverend interrogator looked earnestly in my face, while he was thus solemnly speaking; my countenance underwent a variety of changes, and well might the good man (who knew no disguise in his own actions, and who could suggest no laudable reason why, with respect to him, there should be any in mine) mistake my evident confusion for guilt.

I could not comprehend of what utility *to me*, or satisfaction *to him*, it could be to expose my husband's faults; on the contrary, I believed it my duty to conceal them, to the utmost of my power; when I could do it without injury to my honor, and my religion; yet how to evade so home an interrogation, and to account for its being put was equally hard.

I have always been taught to hold the inventor of a falsehood in abhorrence, nor ever could prevail on myself to consent to evil, that *good* might come of it: after some hesitation therefore, I answered, as I thought my duty to my husband demanded, without violating the truth: that I was *not* at liberty to disclose the reasons for our conduct.

To

To my unutterable grief, the good father instantly left my house; nor did he as usual call for his playfellow, or condescend to take any notice, either of *her* or *me*, when we met him in our little rambles round the village.

On Friday when I went to mass, instead of that consoling manner that always reached my soul with comfort; he went through the duty of his office, regarding me with a stern, and angry countenance; and as soon as service was over, instead of those benign greetings that were wont to render me respectable to the rest of his flock, he turned into his house without speaking.

Oh! my dear brother! I thought my heart would burst; the only friend (and him raised by heaven) to me and my child, to be thus suddenly and unaccountably prejudiced against me; to be thus cast from the protection of benevolence, condemned unheard.

Alas! what had I done? what tongue so vile to calumniate so very wretched and inoffensive a being? but was this *justice*, was it *religion*, to add to the sorrows of the *poor* and *needy*? how could I have offended father St. Jerome, yet grant I had been so unhappy as to lay under his displeasure, would so good, so holy a man forget the respect due to misfortune?

Oh! no! said I, suddenly stopping, some dreadful cause there is, but I am innocent; why then should I therefore fear to ask it? I will go back, I will demand of father Jerome the reasons for his behaviour, I will at least know in what I am criminal, and I returned to the village with this resolution.

When I entered the dwelling of the charitable priest, he was distributing alms to the aged of his flock,

flock, with the beams of ineffable pleasure glowing on his countenance; my appearance quickly changed the placid smile, into a disgustful frown.

Far from being dismayed at a reception I knew it must cause *him some* pain to give me, it inspired me with courage; I waited 'till his pensioners were dismissed, and then, in a firm voice though not unaccompanied with tears; entreated he would inform me on what account I had incurred his displeasure.

Your own heart, madam, said he, if you scrutinize it will inform you.

My heart, father, is the seat of misery, but — he interrupted me.

It is the seat of depravity, Mrs. Douglas, had I deserved, madam, to be charged with your commissions; to expose my own character, and that of my friend, in soliciting a married man, to make a provision for a mistress he had deserted.

I was petrified—he proceeded:

Had you, Mrs. Douglas, put on (as became you) the garb of a magdalen; and solicited through me, the means to bring up your child, and support yourself in a state of penitence, and humility; if I had not succeeded in my application to your paramour, there *are* well disposed christians, there *are some virtuous women*, who would not withhold their alms from so pious a purpose.

Let me comprehend you, sir, answered I, with a mixture of spirit and amazement! who are you describing? to what do you allude? and why are *my* ears wounded with such shocking expletives? speak to me sir, in the language you
were

were used to; let me learn from you the plain meaning of words I am so little accustomed to hear.

There, madam, said he, giving me a letter—you have really more natural confidence than I expected—read that—I am going to my closet, you will not perhaps think of demanding a second audience, but should any further explanation be necessary, you know where to find me; with these words he left the room.

I held the important letter in my hand which was to unveil a mystery I longed, yet feared to develope; my agitation was so violent, and my hands trembled to that degree, I tore the paper in half before I could see the contents—oh! the horror of that moment is still present to my memory, even *now* I tremble at the recollection—it is too much—I lay down my pen—my sight fails me——



LETTER

L E T T E R X V.

*To General Moncrass.**St. Clare's Posthumous Letter continued.*

O H that the painful task was ended, that having reposed my sad story in my brother's noble bosom, I might close my weary eye-lids, and no more behold iniquity—oh shut me up for ever—let me lose in the grave the memory of my sins and the bitterness of recollection—when will this rebellious spirit be subdued? when shall my soul reject vanity?

* * * * *

The letter was from father Dominick, chaplain to the french minister at London: it contained an account of having succeeded in his enquires after Mr. Neville, who had been married a long time to the only daughter of the Earl of Ruthven; that he was in possession of large family estates, and a great personal fortune; that supposing from those circumstances, *this* could not be the man after whom he was requested to enquire; he had waited on Lord Ruthven respecting the annuity, who was much surprised, and offended at the application, as *his* allowance to Mr. *Neville abroad*, had naturally ceased, when that gentleman married his daughter, and came into possession of his own large fortune.

Father

Father Dominick further added, that he then thought Mr. Neville must have first assigned, and then continued this annuity to some relation; but on enquiry of himself, he acknowledged *he* was the person who had gone by the name of Douglas, that he had left a woman, with whom he had some time cohabited, at Geneva, that the matter of the annuity had slipt his memory, but that he certainly meant to continue it: at the same time as he was a married man, and his wife one of the most amiable of her sex, he entreated the matter might be kept secret, lest it should disturb her tranquility.

God knows how I was supported thro' the reading of this letter; yet still loth to believe such *villainy*, (*unheard of by me*) could exist in a human breast; a latent hope would arise, even against possibility, that some mistake or misrepresentation had deceived father Dominick, oh brother,

“ Love what we see can from our sight remove,
“ And things invisible are seen by love.”

Contrary to the expectation of the good priest I entered his closet, and after calmly re-perusing the killing letter, told him the real reason of my taking the name of Douglas, the name of the priest who married us at Ancona, and also that of the protestant divine, who repeated the ceremony at Montpellier.

Never was there a more instantaneous change than that which appeared in father Jerome—he wept over me—and declared he would not rest 'till he had probed the heart of my husband: he would not believe his friend could be mistaken, he knew (he said) how cautious he would be of deceiving *him*; you are not, my child (continued he), equal to the fraud and vice which are every day

day to be met in this bad world, but you shall go to England, I am myself preparing to remove to Paris, where I am recalled by my patron the Marquis St. Lawrens.

I shrieked with surprise, the Marquis St. Lawrens, repeated I—ah! where is he?—and where is Victoire?—that amiable, that dear friend—does she exist?—alas! is the poor Agnes totally obliterated from her remembrance?

What is it I hear? answered the good father—Agnes!—ah wretch is it thou?—and has the Almighty found thee then—does his judgment pursue thee—has he arrested thy fugitive soul—dost thou feel his vengeance? And is it the wretch who tempted thee to forsake thy God—by whom thou also art forsaken?

I heard no more—the forfeiture of life! ah what was that! to the agonizing reproaches of my conscience, which roused by the just severity of the Priest, flash'd conviction on my senses: I fell insensate and prostrate before him.

Why should I shock you, with an account of my sufferings?—I was carried home to my miserable dwelling, but not abandoned by the father; who continued with holy zeal to paint the enormity of my crime, and the certain destruction of my soul, if a life of the strictest penitence was not immediately begun, and if I did not return to the humble practice of the most severe duties of the order I had forsaken.

Ah! my child!—my child! cried I—my sweet injured child,—if *I forsake thee who will protect thee?*

Vain wretch, answered the good man—*thy protection!* how darest thou, who art an outcast of heaven, presume thy protection will avail her

aught ? rather instantly leave thy innocent child to any outrage of fate, than draw on *her* the curse of *thy* apostacy.

O brother ! this was too hard a task ; I put myself entirely under the guidance of the holy man, but implored him to spare to me my child.

On condition of my binding myself to leave the world, immediately on my return, he consented to my taking the child with me, and going to England ; there to prove my marriage, and do justice to my poor Agnes ; where he enjoined me to leave her under the care of father Dominick, to whom he would write ; and who would he was sure, procure for her the protection of the ambassador, to whom he was chaplain—Want no money, added the charitable priest, it is in my power to supply you with, do justice on this heretic, and save your own soul.

I left my house, and family matters, to be disposed of by my ghostly friend, for the advantage of those good people who had given me credit ; and set out on my journey to England, with my dear Agnes ; the most miserable wretch that breathed the vital air.

Ah brother ! think on my distraction—you now know my Agnes—she was then just five years old ; her natural beauty, undoubtedly greater in my eye, than that of any other person, her manner, and her temper equally engaging, and her opening sense, all that my most sanguine wish could make it.—Figure to yourself the fondest of mothers, with such a child in her arms, not daring to lift up her soul to the God she had offended—the Saviour she had abandoned—to ask a blessing on the innocent offspring of her guilt.

Then

Then how soon was I to part with her for ever ! oh what a sacrifice did guilt demand !—what floods of tears flowed on my sleeping infant ! for while she was awake, so great was her sensibility at that early period of her life, my tears un-nerved her little frame, and my sorrows were sure to affect her health ; in love therefore to her, I was obliged to conceal the anguish that filled my soul, even to madness.

Many—many an hour have I hung over her, till my senses have forsook me, and I have been either left in a torpid state of insensibility, or seized with fits of despair, which often tempted me to end a being destined to bear the keenest misery—but the dreadful *hereafter*, the fear of meeting the eye of my angry Creator—blessed be his name, prevented me ; and a flood of tears generally calmed my mind after those transports of grief, and passion.

In this situation of mind, I reached London, where my first care was to find father Dominick ; who, as soon as he was apprized of my arrival, informed me Mr. Neville was in town ; and that, if I wished to see him before we made our public claims, in order to be certain of his identity, he knew the hour at which he usually went out, and we might take a hackney-coach and wait in the street near his door.—we did so.—

Ah my brother ! there needed no more to prove it was indeed *my* Neville——Oh pardon, pardon merciful God !—and oh, my dearest brother ! do you too forgive your miserable sister, if she owns, even now, she could gaze with rapture on the dear—the well-known face,—could she one moment separate the image of the man

she loved—from the most wicked, and obdurate of human beings.

At sight of him I fainted in the arms of father Dominick, and even Agnes, tho' so young when left by her cruel father her sweet face glowing with extacy, cried out, Mon papa—mon papa.

Father Dominick brought me back to my lodgings with hardly any signs of existence : with the certainty of Neville's identity, the proofs of his guilt came in such undeniable forms to my senses, that altho' I went to England—resolved, had he been innocent, to tear myself from him, to return in penitence to the altar I had perjured myself to leave ; yet the confirmed depravity of him for whom I had broke my holy vow, and given up salvation, struck to my heart : a slow fever immediately seized my spirits, which continued two months ; and it was but at intervals, I knew even my child.

During this period, it pleased Heaven to deprive me of the only friend in whom I confided : my confessor, the blessed Priest to whose pious exhortations I owe the returning mercy of God, was called out of this world, to one where I trust my purified spirit will recognize his.

His effects were claimed by the heirs ; and his death, which happened at the country Chateau of the Marquis St. Lawrens, being sudden, he was so far from having made any provision for me, that the memorandums of the different sums he had advanced to, and for me, not being erased from his tablets, by the same mail that brought to father Dominick the account of his death, he was also desired by the heirs to procure from me, the money the deceased had advanced for my use.

Father

Father Dominick was too charitable to be rich ; he was indeed at this time labouring under many difficulties in his circumstances, occasioned by his being bound in a considerable sum for a member of his church, who had deceived the world, and broke his faith with his friend.—

Nevertheless my situation was a bond on his humanity nothing could prevail on him to break ; he went to Neville and charged him with the crime he had been guilty of, in marrying his present Lady ; and the injury offered *me* and his daughter, by such an atrocious breach of the laws of society.

The trembling culprit half-owning, and half-denying the charge, desired the Priest to call on him the next morning.

But he had then acquired more fortitude, and positively denied his marriage ; although he acknowledged that he had lived with me, and that Agnes was his daughter : he offered to secure to me the former annuity, and to settle a handsome sum on the child, if I would sign a general release and return to Geneva.

Father Dominick represented to him my situation both of mind and body ; but added, he was certain I would accept no compromise—that the Priest who married us at Ancona, was now by the particular favor of a cardinal to whom he was related, raised to the dignity of a prelate ; and his word would be received as an indisputable voucher.

Who do you speak of, said Neville ? I never was at Ancona — far be it from me to dispute the word of the prelate you allude to, but I am sure he will not say he married James Neville to Mrs. Douglas,

You observe brother—poor wretch !

But said my friend, Mr. Dormer, the protestant divine will not be persuaded *he* did not hear the confession of Mr. Neville, who had married Mrs. Douglas under that feigned name ; nor, that he did not repeat the ceremony at Mr. Neville's particular request.

Possibly not, replied he coolly, you will do well to find him :

He is living sir said Dominick,

I do not deny it father, answered he.

He is in England rejoined Dominick, or was not six weeks back.

Neville smiled, and Dominick saw it was a smile of triumph ; he was hastening from him to make fresh enquiries after Mr. Dormer, who we afterwards found was in India, but was detained to have the honesty of his nature, the rectitude of his principles, and the honor of his religion insulted, by the offer of a thousand pounds if he would disgrace himself, by conveying your poor, ruined, and then senseless sister out of the kingdom.—

The reverend father trembled with indignation —Never sir, said he, will I again degrade myself by holding converse with you, 'till I can openly fix the odium you deserve on your despicable character.

Sad accounts those my brother, for your Agnes, when her reason, but not her health returned ; yet eager to prosecute my claim for the sake of my orphan, as it was then likely she would soon be, and dreading to be a burthen on the good Priest ; I formed a resolution as extraordinary as desperate.

I wrote to Neville—my letter was brought back
—he

—he was gone to his country seat—he had left the poor creature, his legal wife, *sick, insensible, and destitute*; his beautiful child, *poor*, and but for the charity of some good catholic thro' father Dominick *friendless*——Yes—the hard-hearted man had taken a party with him to his villa to *shoot*, that was the servant's answer.—

Oh thou Almighty—thou long-suffering Saviour!

I procured his address, and sent my letter by post; the contents of which were to inform him without one reproach, that if he did not do me justice by acknowledging his marriage, I would go to St. James's and cast myself and child at the feet of the Queen of England—that I would declare my wrongs in the presence of the nobility of the country, and rely on the mercy, as well as justice of a woman, who was herself the first *wife* and *mother* in the world: I gave him *one month* to consider of my demand.

A letter to Dominick by return of post without a name—but which I knew to be his hand and seal requested a longer time for consideration, which by Dominic's advice I agreed to.

The interval I employed in giving such instructions to my child, as were most likely to leave lively impressions of her mother's fondness in her memory, in humbling my soul before heaven, and in regaining the bodily strength I had lost in my illness.

I was one morning weeping over my little girl, when Dominick entered the room; you are undone madam said he—you must fly this moment—I commit a sin in giving you this notice; and he threw down two papers one directed to Agnes Moncrafts, the other to himself.

That to him was a letter from the Marquis of St. Lawrens; it gave him “ notice of an information laid before his holiness against him, “ for harbouring and abetting an apostate nun, “ and said, no trouble or expence would be “ spared, *now she was discovered*, to bring the “ sinful wretch back to a sense of her guilt; father St. Jerome added the Marquis made us acquainted with the miserable fate of the undone “ creature, my daughter, whose noviciate was “ spent with her, was content to find that her “ penitence equalled her crime, and gave up “ the thought of ever hearing of her more; but “ now she will perhaps be returned to her convent at Lisbon, and undergo the merciless “ sentence of an inquisition, Victoire is much “ distressed, and begs you will give the poor “ wretch the inclosed; you have my authority “ to take care of her child, which we hear is a “ female; and if the heretic, her father will not “ acknowledge her, send her to us, the Marchionesses will protect her.

“ It would be absolutely necessary should Dominick be disposed to assist me, (the Marquis “ further said) for me to leave the place where I “ then was, and conceal myself in some remote “ part of the kingdom, where the catholic religion was least known; that so he might escape the enquiries, which tho’ covert, would “ be surely set on foot; let her not, continued “ he, depend on the protection of the laws of “ the kingdom she is in—*you well know the possibility of conveying from thence, criminals “ who have not again been heard of.*”

To gratify the ardent request of his daughter it was, that the Marquis took this step in my favor;

vor; on whom the censure of the church would be incurred if the transaction became known; he therefore sent this letter by a trusty messenger who had orders to travel post with it, and recommended inviolable secrecy to father Dominick, of whose integrity he had no doubt——

The other letter which was addressed to me, was from Victoire—ah brother! what a letter! but you will see, and know the beloved writer; the abbess of the convent D——, my Victoire, will, when her St. Clare is no more, transfer the tenderness she has ever felt for the ill fated mother, to her innocent child—she will also love the brother of her *then*—yes Victoire! I feel I shall then again be *your sister*.

You know the dreadful punishment not indeed more *dreadful*, than *deserved* inflicted, particularly where the inquisitorial power is held in any kind of reverence, on the few of the professed sisterhood who have been so wicked as to break their vows,* and may conceive the terror I was in; gladly would I immediately have followed the advice of my true friend, but how to disguise myself, how to escape present, and future detection?—there was not a moment to lose—I took—oh my God! what an embrace—of my child, and having hastily changed the dress I had on, for one I had not yet worn in England; I wrote a line for father Dominick, and sent a catholic servant he had procured to wait on me, with my child to him.

I then immediately left my lodgings on foot, without knowing whither to go, or how to inform myself of the part of England, where ac-

* The punishment here alluded to is that of being shut up for ever between four walls, without light or sustenance.

According to the Marquis's hint, I should be least likely to meet any of my own religion: after rambling in uncertain terror two hours from street to street, I came to a field which led to the high road, where soon after a stage coach passed me, which was going to a large town on the western road; weary and indisposed, I was obliged to run every risk of discovery, as I found it impossible either to pursue my undetermined way or to return back on foot; I therefore agreed with the driver, and by the particular providence of God, met a female fellow-traveller, to whose humanity I was afterwards indebted for my life.

This good creature, who kept a little shop at the place where we were going; had been to London to fetch from the inoculating hospital, a young orphan girl, whom previous to her taking apprentice, she chose as she informed me should have the small pox; and then proceeded to shew me what a fine sort she had had, how little she was likely to be marked, and how well she had got over the distemper.

I took the infection in that moment, my heart sunk, I conceived the girl had a particular smell, although her mistress assured me she had been above a month well, and out of the hospital; and in short, a sudden faintness came over me which alarmed the woman, who then thought of asking me if I had had the distemper; on finding I had not, she very feelingly regretted her imprudence, begged, instead of going to the Inn where the coach stopped, if I had no acquaintance at Reading, that I would accompany her to her house, and let what would happen she would take care of me: I was the more easily prevailed on to accept her friendly offer, as I knew I had money

ney about me, sufficient to defray my expences, whether I lived, or died ; and as I found my indisposition increase every moment.

Twenty-one days, my dear brother, was my life despaired of, and as if God Almighty doomed me to *feel*, and *know*, my reliance must be on *Him* alone ; the beauty which had been my ruin, was destroyed by the distemper ; besides the marks which my face still retains, the virulence of the disorder left a disagreeable redness on my skin ; the long eye-lashes once the delight of my false husband, were half destroyed, and my eyes too weak, and too sore to bear the light, were no longer objects to excite admiration.

No, brother ! it was not a vain pride of person, *that* was entirely annihilated ; the desertion of Neville, spoke the futility of personal beauty too decidedly to be mistaken : it was *him* the yet dear, the yet *loved father* of my *Agnes*, for whom my heart sunk when I beheld my own altered face—yes the pang was torture, it was *Neville's*.

Ah ! thought I, he may now turn disgusted from a face he no longer knows ; he may deny his wedded Agnes, she exists no longer ; those, and they were witnessed by floods of tears, were my first regrets, but they were also the last struggles of sinful passion ; and religion soon reconciled me to the loss of beauty.

But said I, and my heart bounded in rapture ; I may now embrace my child, I may fold her to my fond maternal heart, and I may again behold Victoire ; severe in virgin purity, in religious fervor as she is, when I can convince her of the sincerity of my repentance, when she is acquainted with my suffering, her soul will re-acknowledge the friend of her youth, and oh heavenly

venly extacy ! I may yet be received into the bosom of our holy church without fear of temporal torture.

I need not remark to you, how unlikely it was I should be known with the marks I have described ; since you had not the least recollection of the face, of your once well known sister : I continued at Reading 'till I had recovered my strength, and nothing left to distinguish my face, but its homeliness ; when I took leave of my hostess, and returned to London.

My first grand object was to see if father Dominick would know me ; I accordingly went to the chapel, where I took care to stand so as to attract his notice, and afterwards received the sacrament at his hands, without his having the most remote recollection of my person.

I then wrote to him by post ; but as I could not be sure the worthy man might not, particularly if he returned to France, be questioned concerning me, by some of the devotees the wicked Neville had contrived to inform of his protection of me ; I forbore to expose him to the disagreeable alternative, of varying from the truth, or betraying me ; and only acquainted him, I was out of danger, without informing him of particulars ; I implored him to tell me what he had done with my child, and hinted my intention of returning to the religious life I had so wickedly deserted.

His answer confirmed my resolution ; my child he said, had been received by the Marchioness St. Lawrens ; on whom her beauty, and innocence had gained so much, that she condescended to pass her to her friends as a relation of her own, and called her Agnes De-Courci.

You know the family, brother, it is one of the
first

first in France; and the Marchioness was the flower of it when the Marquis espoused her: my child thus nobly protected was placed as boarder in the convent where Victoire was then a professed sister, and now is Superior.

The affection and tenderness shewn my poor child by the sister of my heart was not therefore noticed; it was natural for her to be attached to a relation of the Marchioness, and Agnes was not only beloved by her, the whole sisterhood, considering her as a future member, were fond of the little boarder.

I again addressed the good father in terms of the deepest gratitude; and told him, I was resolved to give the wicked Neville up to the vengeance of Heaven; but that as he (father Dominick) was in possession of all the proofs of my marriage, except the testimony of Mr. Dormer, who was then abroad; I implored him on that gentleman's return, to obtain one also from him, and send all my papers to the Marquis St. Laurens; not doubting if that nobleman lived; but that when I was no more, my child would be established by law, the real heiress of Mr. Neville; as his prior marriage with me, must annul his latter one with Lady Mary Ruthven.

My next step will surprize you—I wrote, and sent by post to Mr. Neville this one line;—

“Pay to father Dominick one thousand pounds, on account of the lost

“Agnes Neville.”

I gave an account of this transaction to father Dominick, and informed him, my intention being, under an assumed name, to procure admittance into one of the most rigid order of nuns, which I could not do without money, I had demanded

manded a sum as my *right* from Neville; I would not accept as a *favor*, to enable me to compass the now first wish of my heart—if he paid it, I begged father Dominick to reimburse himself all the expences he had been at on my account, and remit the rest for Clara Valierre to a banker's at Paris, where I immediately went.

In eight days, Dominick, to his surprize, received a draft for the sum I wrote for tho' not I confess to *mine*; as I had no doubt but the man who had taken such cruel pains to rid himself of my persecution, would gladly part with a sum of money, in hopes he should hear no more of a woman he had injured so vilely.

The father also informed me, my friend the Marquis had paid, and that very liberally, all my debts to him, and to the heirs of father St. Jerome—the good man assured me of his constant prayers, told me he was going to Bologne as the Duke he was chaplain to was dead, having left him a comfortable provision, and desired I would on any future exigence apply to him.

Thus was all care for my temporal welfare drawing to a period; I left Paris, and journied to Abbeville, where I entered the convent as a lay-sister in the name of Clara; and had the comfort of often confessing to the same good Prelate, who in his priest's habit had first married me at Ancona.

Here my dear brother, the holy silence of the sequestered walls formed a solemn contrast to the busy scenes in which I had lately been engaged; my heart was soon weaned from all sinful attraction, maternal love, and affection for Victoire, only held a place in a soul I now wholly dedicated to God: but my sin, which I durst not confess.

fess, hung in terror over every hope of eternal peace; the abstinence and penance I endured were yet too weak to expiate my offence; the sisterhood who knew not the magnitude of my crime, and who only witnessed the sincerity of my repentance, added Saint to my name, in token of the respect they bore me; and after six years I took courage to travel to Paris, and presented myself at the convent D——, where Victoire is now Abbess.

And here, my brother, your sister drops her languid pen.

To paint the virtuous joy, the undeviating affection, with which my Victoire received the poor penitent to her arms—to say with what more than maternal care, she bred my Agnes—to speak my obligations to her *friendship*—my admiration of her constant *goodness*, my humble veneration of her *piety*—brother it is too much for mortal power!—*Now!* the blessed *now!* when you read this last address from your sister, will she be able to do justice, to the benevolent spirit of the *woman*, the *friend*, the *saint*, in whose holy friendship she hopes to spend an *endless eternity*—then only—when purified by the pardon of my offences, can I dare to say my soul may mingle with hers—long may my Victoire be spared for the edification, and example of the world, before her beatification shall again join her to her departed friend.

The history of my sorrows, the poignancy of my regrets, and the perfidy of Neville, were lessons her own experience could not teach her, nor the goodness of her heart comprehend.

Ah in what soothing sounds, did the consoling voice of friendship reach my afflicted soul; she presented my child to me, with increased beauty
and

and expanded understanding,—already had Agnes exhibited bright specimens of that docility, and intuitive mind, which at a very early period distinguished her at the convent; and my gratitude to Victoire, and love for Agnes, increased, as I observed the fine accomplishments were blended with an unaffected respect to religion, and that true politeness, received its best polish from true piety.

I had the comfort of embracing my child every year; when indisposition prevented my going to Paris, Victoire visited Abbeville, without any one's suspecting, either, that the little boarder was my child, or that I was the apostate Agnes.

Yet notwithstanding the alteration of my face—my change of name—and the sincere penitence with which I humbled myself before God; the temporal punishment due to my crime, constantly filled me with terror, and anxiety: It is many years since I ceased to wish to live, but a fate so terrible I had wanted courage to meet—and ah my brother! my child bore hard on my peace, and the resignation due to his will whom I had offended; impotent indeed, were my cares, ineffectual my solicitude; alas! what could I do but pray for her? yet a transient gleam of future hope, a fond anticipation of a something yet in embryo, that would support, and protect the innocent victim to a *father's guilt*, often darted on my mind, and gave a momentary relief to the despair that oppressed me; although I could form no idea, from whence a wretch so lost, could expect comfort.

At last *comfort, hope and joy* appeared, and the welcome triumvirate wore the form of my dear, long lost brother: even in the sequestered gloom
that.

that pervaded our severe sisterhood, that noble act of the king of England; which will render his name immortal, who restored the heirs of the proscribed enemies of his ancestors to their country and fortunes, was received with joy; and many more than my unhappy self hailed the *power* of *mercy* with rapture, and veneration; soon did Victoire bless me with the news, that Moncras yet lived to claim, and to receive our forfeited estates; with this welcome communication, I also received her warm wishes, and those of the Marquis and Marchioness that I would endeavour to influence my brother in favor of my injured child.

What a task was this, how could I dare to appear before my brother? how implore him to pardon a crime, I never could forgive myself? how wish to precipitate him into a quarrel, with so fiery, and impenetrable a spirit, as that of Neville? was he restored to his natal honor, and estate after living so long in obliuion, to be involved in fresh troubles? troubles the more to be feared, as the fame of an injured sister was to be vindicated, the rights of an oppressed niece to be asserted, and a wretch to be forced into the practice of every sacred duty, who had basely violated them all.

Yet on the other hand, my own life drawing near its period, how should I answer to my God, and to my child, if I refused to claim for her the protection of her noble uncle? If *I* her *mother* neglected to procure for her the support of the only person who could and should establish her just right to birth and fortune, whose honor being by ties of blood blended with hers would be her natural and best defence.

Long—

Long—long my dearest Moncras, did your unhappy sister hesitate; long did her conscious guilt and fallen spirit shrink from the idea of exposing all her follies bare to the eye of her noble brother; 'till at length, hearing that Neville no longer lived, and feeling that my miserable existence was rapidly approaching to an end, I was encouraged by the justice, as well as the necessity of—this one—this last effort—and resolved to undertake the journey; to cast myself, and my poor fatherless child with all our misfortunes at your feet—you received us like *yourself*, and I felt in your first embrace, all the dignity of our noble father blended with the mild tenderness of our beloved mother.

In compassion to my fears that a discovery of my person would lead to a conviction of my crime; and in reverence to that holy law which enjoined severe penitence for such atrocious iniquity as mine; you agreed to conceal the birth and affinity, of my Agnes, and to postpone the enforcing her natural rights, 'till her mother had paid the great debt of nature; and stood with all her offences on her head in the presence of *him* who only *could* know, that her repentance had expiated her guilt——

That period is now arrived, the apostate nun, who abandoned her God, and perjured herself at the doors of his house; the wretched wife of the cruel Neville, in her turn rejected and deserted; no longer groans under the weight of the guilt and sorrow, her own weakness, and his barbarity inflicted—her emancipated spirit unincumbered by her frail body, *now* soars above the reach of injury; *now* finds refuge where all its aspirations have been long bent—*now* reposes in peace, after

all

all the storms of sin, and passion, on the *bosom* of her *God*.

You Victoire, will receive the last sigh of your poor Agnes; you will see, and pity the pangs, which *friendship*, *fraternal love*, and *maternal fondness* will inflict on her departing spirit.

Ah can I for ever part with my sweet girl? can I bear to know that I shall never more behold the manly irradiating countenance of my beloved brother?

Victoire from thee too I must part: nature will groan in the anguish of this eternal separation—yet it is not eternal—we shall meet again, again join in those rapturous orisons, which in the days of innocence united me to thee—be a mother to my child, fail not to point out to her the only path that will lead her to the mansions of eternal peace.

On my brother's honor, on his promise to transfer to my Agnes the love, the tenderness he once bore his unhappy sister, I rest with unlimited confidence—yes *he* has said it—and his is the voice of undoubted truth—the peace of my last moments hangs on his word.

Father Dominick, now at Bologne, will furnish you with proofs of every material circumstance contained in this long last letter; and oh Moncras! *remember* it is not merely fortune my daughter claims from her uncle, however atrocious the spiritual guilt of her mother, *she* is innocent, *she* is not the offspring of illegitimate passion,—the fame of her mother, with respect to her father, is as pure and as noble as the blood of Moncras—take her then Reuben to thy heart; vindicate her right, support her honor, and clear the wounded fame of your dying sister.

Farewell

Farewell my brother, farewell—the icy hand of death is on me;—I respire with extreme difficulty—even your image, and that of my angelic child lose their wonted power over my senses; they no more recall the flush of pleasure on my pallid cheek—I hear you named by Victoire, without the throbbing tumult which used to fill my languid bosom—my eyes grow dim—they retreat from earth, they look inward unappalled at the awful, the tremendous change, which is even now begun.

Victoire I press thy trembling hand to my heart—I feel thy tears drop on my cheek—sweet earnest of our future greetings—peace, the peace of righteousness be on you all—my child—my brother—my friend—blessed forebodings! we part a few years, to meet in an endless eternity—where the wicked cease to trouble—and where the weary are at rest—once—oh once more—ye dear inmates of my soul, farewell,

AGNES.

LETTER

L E T T E R XVI.

*Agnes to Madame St. Laurens.**Belle-Vue.*

WHAT a checquered scene, my dear madam, for the last few months, have the life of your Agnes presented.

I have been preserved, miraculously preserved, from a dreadful fate by Mr. Harley ;—and it was from him I first learnt our mutual misfortunes, in the beatification of holy St. Clare.

Dear madam ! respected lady abbess ! I took my pen, I will console said I, my beloved monitress ; I will promise to supply to her the place of the friend she has lost—but alas ! I feel the presumption of the thought ; I am in despair myself, and how can I hope, in any thing to equal St. Clare ; permit me therefore madam, to ask from you the comfort I cannot impart.

St. Clare then was more than the friend of your Agnes—she was her Mother——Why my dearest madam ? oh why ! was the dear claim not revealed ; till it was too late to pay her the humble, the tender duty, due to such a parent ?—Have I only known a mother to lament her loss ?——How often have I seen her eyes overflowing in tenderness, when she pressed me to her aching breast ; how often have they been turned to heaven in speechless agony, after contemplating my features :

features: the affection she excited in me, the respect, the reverence I felt for her, was the intuition of nature; my heart hung on her—and after every visit we paid her, the separation was that of soul and body.

Oh my mother!

How amiable were her precepts—how gentle her manners—how unassuming her virtue—how perfect her resignation—how edifying her piety—and, ah madam! Why must I add—how sincere her penitence?

Guard me, you who are the counterpart of St. Clare, whose goodness, and whose virtue equal'd her's! oh guard me from the sin of reprobating my own father:—how will his guilty spirit meet his injured wife?—How will he shrink appall'd from the righteous eye of God?—Oh! may he receive the mercy he did not shew, and may the blessed spirit of my dear mother, hover over her orphan daughter—may she interpose between her Agnes, and the malediction denounced against the children of the unrighteous—join dear Lady Abbess with me in this prayer—I tremble lest the sins of my father, should be visited on me; those of my mother are atoned—what agonies did they not inflict—Her delicate form was wasted, by the penances she continually imposed on herself: youth, beauty, health, rest, and peace; were all offered in expiation of her broken vow.

The good bishop you say at her last unreserved confession, gave her full absolution; and she died, with every assurance, that her punishment would *end here.*—Alas for pity.

* * * * *

Yes,

Yes, it was her righteous prayer, that preserved me, in the midst of flames;—that sent Harley to my aid, when I was no longer sensible of the terrors which surrounded me.

* * * * *

When I concluded my last letter I told you of the engagement I had made to exchange confidence, with the amiable girl they called Betsy.

Mr. Arnold had in his walk, picked up two of the neighbours, and a person from London; these he invited to supper with him, and his spirits were so exhilarated by the expected advancement of his daughter, that when we arose to retire after supper, they insisted on our staying; Betsy must sing, and Miss Arnold play on her spinnet.

Had her situation been less embarrassed, she would certainly have spiritedly refused to comply with a request which was in effect a command: but, tho' I was ignorant from what cause, I knew her apprehensions were as lively as my own: and that Lord Morden, the man, whose visits to Greenwich, so much exhilarated the spirits of the Arnolds, was an object equally terrifying to her, as to me—her little heart struggled with pride, and to me, her eyes evidently display'd the conflict of her mind.

Miss Arnold was seated at her spinnet, and the vulgar visitors were staring in admiration of her accomplishments; when Mr. Arnold again insisted, Betsy should accompany his daughter's music with her voice.

What shall I sing? asked she with a frown, and (for the first time I had observed her spirits sink) a desponding air.—

Any

Any thing—any thing—no matter what *you* sing, so as *my Nancy* can play it; answered the fond father.

She cast a glance at me—there was a mellow sweetness in her eyes that demanded compassion; mine were ready to overflow, but a sense of the importance it might be of to us both, to conceal our agitation, restrained me: as she passed me to join Miss Arnold at the instrument, I softly reminded her of the promised interview; and then after the salutations of the night, lighted one of the candles, which were always placed on a side-table, after supper.

What be you going Miss Farquar? said Mrs. Arnold, winking significantly at her husband, dear me you are in a vastacious hurry—you be'n't merry at all to-night.

She has no particular cause, said my little champion, turning round in the middle of her song.—

La, Betsey you have put me out, exclaimed Miss—

To be sure she has, said Mr. Arnold, who having drank an unusual quantity of a liquor they called grog, was growing very authoritative, which he never was, but when he had drank a glass extraordinary of his favorite beverage; and for to tell you a piece of my mind Miss Farquar, I think you mought as well stay up a bit, as go to bed; what you ben't like the dog in the manger be you?

I was all amazement! I could not understand what he alluded to in this rude speech, but I found it was amusing as it was followed by a loud laugh, in which all but Betsey, and myself joined;

ed ; I sought information from her expressive eyes but *they* were cast down.

Irresolute, and trembling ; after a moment's pause, (during which the loud laugh continued) I foolishly retreated to my chair, and Betsy, leaving Miss Arnold at her spinet, resumed her seat.

I had now unwittingly been guilty of another offence.—

You might as well put out the candle Miss Farquar, they be'nt so cheap, and I suppose you don't use such mould-candles in France.—

No, no, said the men altogether joining in another laugh.

I arose in the greatest hurry to repair my error ; but I was fated now, not only to endure mortification, but to deserve it.

After supper the large table at which we had sat, was removed ; and a small round one substituted in its place, for the convenience of holding the bottles, glasses, and a large china bowl, in which they mixed their liquor, nearer the men ; the bottles were of a monstrous size, and full ; the drinkers were yet enjoying their laugh at my expence, when in the trepidation, and confusion occasioned by their brutal behaviour, my foot slipped, and I unfortunately overthrew the whole apparatus.—Some of the contents of the bottles fell on Mrs. Arnold, but more on the men ; the carpet was deluged, and all the glasses, and the bowl lay in fragments.

Poor Mrs. Arnold stood speechless and agast ; her husband, and his friends looked at each other with astonishment ; but their good humour prevailing, another loud fit of laughter, was followed by Mr. Arnold's ordering fresh bottles, and glasses : mean while his wife's face, which

had at the moment of the accident turned very pale, was gradually changing to a sort of blue red.

Nancy Arnold is not naturally an ill-tempered young woman ; she had been often witness, to the excesses, into which her mother's temper carried her ; and seeing the storm gathering, which threatened to burst on my head, very kindly approached the place where I yet stood, with "a vacant eye" looking at the mischief I had done, and led me out of the room, before Mrs. Arnold recovered her speech.

Shut your door, said she, miss Farquar, and on no account be provoked to make mamma any answer ; she will I am afraid be very outrageous.

I took her advice, and in a few minutes, had reason to congratulate myself on my escape ; were I to describe to you, madam, all the vulgar insults, the poor woman thought herself entitled to offer me ; you would hardly believe, any thing in a female form, could so dishonour her sex : my person, my country, and the confusion of mind, which occasioned the disaster were alike vilified ; she came to my door, and demanded ten guineas, which she declared would not half pay her for the mischief, she *knew* I had *wilfully* done her—even Betsy, lost her influence on the occasion ; neither hers, nor Miss Arnold's entreaties, for a long while had the least effect ; and I was almost insensible with fear, when after terrible threats of what she would do to-morrow, she was prevailed on to quit my door.

I was my dear madam, you will believe, ill disposed for rest after this scene ; nor did I dare to leave my apartment in search of Betsy, as we had preconcerted.

Mrs.

Mrs. Arnold's voice still re-sounded over the whole house, tho' she was I perceived in her daughter's apartment, at the other extremity of the building :

The men, whose noise encreased as midnight advanced, were yet in the parlour, where we had left them ; and were amusing themselves, with what they called singing.

The impressions of terror, and disgust, which the unmatronly Mrs. Arnold's behaviour, had left on my mind ; the uncertainty of what the very morrow (on which she threatened to avenge the injury I was unable to atone, in the only way which could possibly mitigate her anger) might bring forth, from beings still more dreadful to *me* than even *her* ; all conspired to distress me.

I thought of you, of St. Clare, they have abandoned me cried I, wringing my hands, tears streaming from my eyes ; they desert their Agnes, and she is no longer the care of heaven—I am environed with dangers—there is no way to escape—I am lost even to hope—but what have I done ? how have I deserved ? and a proud sense of conscious innocence swelled my heart ; my tears ceased to flow, an indignant apathy rendered me bold——

This woman cannot kill me said I—she dares not even offer me any violence—and the utmost malice of her words, will want the power to reach the soul of Agnes De-Courci—but that wicked lord, and his despicable adherents ; alas (and again I wept) more callous far in iniquity, than the unamiable Mrs. Arnold in temper ; what will my innocence, my pride, the conscious rectitude of my heart, what will these avail if I am

so unhappy as to be again in their power? oh let me die first? I will once more if possible escape from them, and if heaven do not bless my wish to return to France, I will implore the protection (alas of whom?) whom said I, starting with joy at the thought, which darted like a sun-beam on my mind, of the woman who injured me, who falsely accused me of having injured her; of Lady Mary Moncreafs.

There was nothing so desperate madam, in this scheme; it even appeared so eligible to me, I wondered I had not before adopted it; my placing a confidence in her, thought I, will be attended with many obvious good effects, it will by clearing my honor, restore peace to *her* bosom, and reconcile her, to her husband.

It will be a safe and honorable means, of returning me to my dear convent——

And it will convince Harley—— but what am I saying? said I self corrected——

In short, the more I pondered on this plan, the more pleased I was with it; I immediately sat to the *escrutoire*, and wrote a letter, which I determined openly to send her ladyship next morning: and also to acknowledge my name, and connection, by way of screening myself from any future insults from Mrs. Arnold, and to extort from her, the protection of her house, 'till my letter was answered.

It is inconceivable, my dear lady Abbess, with what confidence, and alacrity I addressed Lady Moncreafs; no doubt of her goodness—no fear of her censure—impeded the joyful expedition in which I wrote—she is noble!—she is virtuous!—this I said to my heart, over, and over, as I folded the letter, which I laid ready addressed

fed

fed on the table ; and after the storms of the day, dropt to sleep in my cloaths, with a composure, to which I had been long a stranger : while the hurricane still continued raging in the house.

I remember the clock went one, before I had finished my letter—my sleep was most probably the sounder, from the serenity of my mind ; and I think it was about half past three, when I was awakened, by a want of breath and an effort to cough—I found myself almost in a state of suffocation, and heard a cracking noise, which was instantly succeeded by a light at my window, which I saw with affright came from the flames below stairs.

I ran, half senseless, to the door of my room ; the stair-case had already taken fire, from the parlour below, where we had spent the preceding disastrous evening—I saw the danger I was in—the stairs only led to my room, and an adjoining one, which was the best chamber—I forced myself down through fire, and smoke, and happily gained the hall—I looked back, madam—a moment later I must have perished—the room I left was already in flames.

The family were all alarmed, and running to, and fro', in the utmost consternation and affright—Mr. and Mrs. Arnold were shrieking for help, and calling for their children, who tho' they were clinging about them, they seemed not to recollect—the maids, and man were lamenting, and the latter ringing an alarm bell.

They saw not me nor had I power to speak.

As soon as Mrs. Arnold found her children were safe, she began to call as loud for help, to preserve her property ; and having then recovered a little, from the stupid terror, that had be-

numbed my faculties; I was preparing to offer my little assistance—when I thought of Betsy—my amiable friend—my little protectress.

I looked wildly round—I shrieked—ah she is not here—she is perishing—I gasped for breath—I might have died, nobody minded me.

I have before told you, Miss Arnold's apartments, as they were called, were in a new built wing at one end of the house, under which was the kitchen.

Where I slept was a correspondent one at the other, over the parlour—and to each of those wings there was a separate flight of stairs.

Miss Arnold was a treasure too precious to be trusted far from her father, she slept in a closet adjoining his chamber, but her cloaths, works, books, &c. were kept in the room allotted for her particular use, where also Betsy slept.

I looked with dreadful anxiety towards the stairs, they were yet standing.

I then ran, or rather flew to the door, and rapp'd almost suffocated, again, with smoke.

She did not answer me.

I shrieked out, fire, fire, and again rapp'd.

I heard her then, running about the room, lamenting she could not find the door; and presently found she had unbarred her window.

I turned my head, the flames were ascending, the stairs took fire, it was impossible for me to return.

The dreadful fate, from which I had so recently escaped, and from which I was so anxious to save my friend, now seemed inevitable.

Fear, and desperation, gave me strength and courage; which I acknowledge to be the immediate mercy of God—I burst open the door.

I saw

I saw my friend, and was flying to her, but her words as she leaned out of the window, stopped and petrified me—I fell against the door, which closing with my weight, preserved the room a few moments longer.—

Mr. Harley, cried she, for God's sake save me; save the life of Julia Neville.

I in a moment saw him enter—Dear Julia!—sweet maid!—How? but this is no time—let me preserve you while yet I can.

She threw her arms round him, while he bore her to a ladder he had placed against the house; and both vanished from my astonished sight.

I then ran with avidity to the window, my eyes followed them, he made his way through the croud, Julia yet in his arms; while I, the poor, forlorn, deserted Agnes, was left by *him*, by all the world; to worse than annihilation.

I now saw myself once more devoted to death:—but ah madam! in the one moment between me, and eternity—Harley occupied all my thoughts—he has left me to perish, said I, the fortunate Julia Neville engrosses all his tenderness—all his care.

I beheld the wild confusion before me with resignation, I asked not for help.

The family, and those who had come to their assistance, passed and repassed; the ladder on which Harley had both ascended, and preserved Julia Neville, was by accident thrown down; this occasioned a little stop under the window, where I yet stood; but I had neither power, or wish to supplicate for assistance—Harley was gone—my eyes were achingly fixed on the spot where I last saw him—all nature died before me—I lost my senses, nor recovered, till I had been providentially

tially saved by my better Angel ! who at first, covered with smoke, and scorched by the fire, I did not know.

After this happy event, after what you know of Harley, and after my former voluntary confessions ; say, my beloved lady Abbess, will the sanction of your invaluable blessing, be added to that of my uncle ? without it I never can accept Mr. Harley, and without him, why should I blush to acknowledge it, your Agnes cannot be happy : to you madam, my more than parent, I hold myself accountable for every act of my life : in you St. Clare yet lives, it is you who speak her sentiments, who breathe her piety, and who practice her virtues : withhold not then dear madam your unbiassed opinion, on this great event of my life. You know Mr. Harley, you have seen, how open his countenance, how mild his conversation, and how pleasing his address ; but you are yet to learn, how equally he tempers gravity with gaiety, how devoted to rectitude, how judicious his sentiments, and how animated his friendship ; happy is the being to whom he is a friend ; “ he loves them in prosperity—defends them in adversity—and laments them in death.”

Do not blame your Agnes, it is not the partial voice of passion only, which speaks in praise of Harley ; the noble and unprejudiced heart of General Moncras, is devoted to his young friend ; and the re-union of the worthiest pair in the world is protracted only ’till your consent arrives.

The dread always on the spirits of my beloved mother, lest she should be discovered to be the same Agnes who eloped from the convent at Lisbon ; and for whose apprehension great rewards were offered, added to some other private reasons, induced

induced the General to preserve inviolate from his dearest friends, every particular concerning my birth and affinity to him; and thence the mistaken, and scandalous report, which gave rise to the misunderstanding between my uncle and his Lady. A Major Melrose, one of the worthiest of men, tho' a free liver; has already waited on Lord Ruthven, Lady Mary's Father; we have not yet heard the final result, but Lord Ruthven fixes the criterion of his returning confidence in the General, to depend on my union with Harley.

Thus madam, the will of heaven appears to co-operate with the choice of your Agnes—but let me add, if that choice does not receive your full approbation, if the unbiaſſed sanction of my second mother, does not fully accord with the reasons I have adduced; then will I forego every pleasing hope *here*, for the equally pleasing one, of adding to the comforts of my early instructress, my constant friend; and throw myself into the bosom of your happy convent, in the firm confidence, that God will accept the vows of your

AGNES.

L E T T E R XVII.

*General to Lady Mary Moncrefs.**Belle-Vue.*

YOU have now my dearest Mary before you, the history of that unfortunate sister, for whom you have so often seen my tears to flow; poor Agnes; the same moment gave us birth, sorrow, and disappointment, followed us from the grave of our parents; many years our fates were equally marked with distressful incidents, would to God the similarity had still continued; that I had seen my sister bending downwards in life, with the same peace, and tranquility, which lately has, and I trust yet will, be the happy lot of her brother: but she is no more, and I turn, my beloved wife, from the urn of my departed sister, to the arms of the best of women, and of wives.

You see, Mary, without disclosing the secret entrusted to me by a dying faint, I could not accede to your conditions: and how could I assume courage, had that not been the case, to tell you, that your Julia must be deprived of the rights of birth, and fortune, in favor of a niece of mine, the very person most obnoxious to you? my anxious eagerness to unite her to my son is now explained: I could not dare to violate a promise, extorted from me, by the grief, and injuries of an expiring sister; it was not only the bonds of fraternal love; it was the claims of justice, and humanity;

humanity; yet how could I prevail on myself, to take any step in favor of my niece, that would fix dishonor on the daughter of my wife? sweet amiable Julia, why must the iniquities of thy father, be visited on thee? yet shall a stain rest on the house of Monerafs? shall a daughter of that noble race, live disgraced, and unacknowledged, while a male of our honored name exists?

Oh Mary, think of the conflicts I suffered between my love for you, and my desire to see justice done to the child of my injured sister; torn with agonizing regrets, abandoned by you, deprived of the dear society my soul panted after, the anguish of my mind, extending to my body, and utterly at a loss what step to take, in remedy of those complicated ills: I had even *now*, almost called you cruel, *now* when I am anticipating with transport, your return to my arms, never more to be separated.

Your Julia, *my* Julia, and her husband, are with me; she is no longer Julia Neville; she now honors the name of Monerafs; and on Thursday next, Edward Harley espouses my niece; there will then, no longer be an Agnes Neville; perish the name, may it sink with the villainy of their father, into the gulph of eternal oblivion.

Permit me my love, to remind Lord Ruthven; who I flatter myself, will now think more favorably, of a man who ever honored, and esteemed *him*; of the disposition he made of his fortune, when you was given to the most worthless of men; his whole estate is I think bound to the child, or children you might bear to Neville; let me forbear to wound my adored wife, yet it is proper she should be apprised that her marriage not being legal, her daughter cannot inherit under

der that settlement, nor in her unpleasant predicament, as heir at law to her own mother; the advanced age, and ill health of Lord Ruthven, renders this matter of immediate importance, as it may be necessary, in order to have the former settlement annulled; that the whole matter should go into the court of equity.

I have named Thursday, for the nuptials of Harley and my niece; because I flattered myself, my beloved Mary will immediately bless me with her presence; and should she be so disposed, there will be time for her to grace the ceremony; and, because we have not yet received the absolute consent of madam St. Lawrens, which we expect by express; Mrs. James Butler is here, her worthy husband will very soon join us; and I send an invitation this post, to our faithful Constance. You will be received as the angel of peace by your Moncrass, and hailed as the good genius of Belle-Vue, by all its inhabitants; Gallina petitioned to be the bearer of this letter, he has orders to wait your commands; I shall count the tedious hours, 'till I feel the genuine drops of sensibility, which I know will steal down my Mary's cheeks, when she is re-united to her fond adoring husband,

MONCRASS.

My Mary, when she says all she wishes for me to her venerable father; will be sure not to overrate the duty, and respect I feel for him; and should his Lordship condescend personally to give his dear daughter to my arms, a second time; how willingly shall I submit to the procrastination of my own happiness, for the pleasure of adding so much to hers.

LETTER

L E T T E R XVIII.

The Abbess St. Laurens to Agnes.

WHAT, oh thou ever endearing child of my heart, what can I answer to thy solemn application? why dost thou call with such tender earnestness, on *me*, for *my* consent to an union, that will for ever divide thee, from thy second mother? and why must the misgivings of my heart, be imputed even by myself, to a latent self love?—

Agnes my child! the child of my St. Clare! must I then part with thee? how can I give thee up for ever?—how forego the sweet solace of thy conversation?—shall I sanction an union that robs our community of so dear a member? that exposes a destined spouse of heaven, to the temptations of a vain world?

Oh tell me not of the merit, the worth, the graces of the insinuating Harley: the riches, the honor, and splendor that awaits thy union with him: I know them all—but Agnes, hast thou well considered it? this man may lead thee through life, he may strew thy path with rose leaves, whose velvet down may conceal the pointed thorn beneath; but again I say, hast thou considered? art thou aware that thou canst not enter the presence of our God with him?

Art thou sure my sweet girl! child of my heart! sister of my faith! art thou confident thy
love

love for thy holy religion, *can* withstand the tempter, in a form so adored?

Will he not pervert my child? shall I not eternally lose her?

Oh Agnes! born with all thy mother's softness, her beauty, and her native virtue; be not thou heir to her anguish: avoid the sin that will require such ample penitence to atone it: be not an apostate to the faith, in which thou wert born, in which thy whole race have died.——

What dost thou ask? my consent? to what—to thy happiness? is that the request of Agnes Neville to Victoire St. Lawrens?

Oh blessed virgin! witness how fully my agonized heart accords with all that can add to her temporal felicity.

Sanctify O God! to her, the sacrifice I offer of my own peace to hers—oh! may she be happy *here*, without risque to the long long *hereafter*.

Take Harley, take to thine heart, the inestimable jewel on which all my fondness hangs; but, as thou wouldest escape the malediction of my holy community, as thou hopest for the prayers of the righteous, for the immaculate dew-drops of mercy, on thee, and on thy posterity, seek not to weaken the faith of my child——

Worship thou the blameless tenor of *her* life, and keep a strict watch over thine *own*—but presume not thou amiable heretic, to place thy image between Agnes and her crucifix—thy power, between my sister and her redeemer——

Trembling with fear, with regret, with fond maternal love, and convulsed with grief, do I resign her.

Alas! my tears blind me——

Yet

Yet once more—*once* did I say—oh never shall
I cease to adjure thee my child—my beloved—
my friend—to persevere in thy faith—that so my
glad spirit may greet thee, in those mansions
where there are no marrying, nor giving in mar-
riage—where St. Clare, and her Agnes may be
again united to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIX.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

YOUR Caroline arrived here last night, in perfect health, and spirits; how rapid are the approaches to friendship in congenial beings, Agnes and my sister are already inseparable.

I wonder not, Edward, said Caroline, as we returned from a ride she invited me to take with her to the hermitage this morning, at your passion for Miss De Courci; she is more lovely than even you described her; I expected to see a beautiful finely accomplished woman, but Agnes is more; there is a certain graceful perfection in her form, and a sublimity in the contour of her countenance, which gives one an idea of something seraphic; a something one feels without the power to express it; then her voice, I never heard any thing so melodious, so meltingly soft, you must have been impenetrable not to have been captivated by her.

Ah James, how flattered was I by this eulogium on my charmer; how doubly so at my return, to hear *her* speak, not less partially of my sister.

What a lot is mine, oh! may no envious cloud arise to obscure the bright horizon of my felicity; spare her to me Oh merciful God! while *she* is mine I will bend in patient resignation to
thy

thy dispensations ! however grievous, however afflicting, thy wisdom may decree them to be ! — She passes my window, ~~she~~ smiles, her eye beams ineffable sweetness ; Oh forbear ! forbear ! to such excess do I doat on thee, and such is thy power over my senses, that even thy smiles, dear object of my unalterable fondness, are productive of agony ; yes they are pleasure, to extreme of pain ; do you comprehend me, Butler ? no ! for tho' you love, you have not like me been hopeless ; you cannot conceive the transition from deep despair, to joy, to rapture.

Thursday next ; oh this painful sensibility ! I tremble as I write, my heart bounds to my throat, I almost cease to respire.

Thursday next—how my soul anticipates the proud triumph of that day—I shall look down on princes, I shall clasp my own Agnes, to my faithful bosom, it will be past the power of mortal efforts to tear her from me :—she will be *mine*—do you Butler feel like me, the force of that expression ? *mine*—she, Agnes De Courci will be *mine*.—Oh that it were come ! that it were past !

How hard to bear is excess of joy, mine is the more so, as while I tremble with extasy, my heart sinks in fearful apprehension, lest some fatal accident should yet intervene, betwixt me, and heaven : I have run over in my mind every thing that can possibly happen, to blast my fond aspiring hopes, and I see no one event, death only excepted, which can have that baneful effect ; yet such is my agitation, so much does my soul hang on next thursday ; that I shrink with terror, I am appalled at impossibilities.

But

But is it indeed possible ? Oh Butler, where are now thy fatal prognostics, who now is injured by my inactive spirit ? I grant that retirement is the nurse of sensibility : that passion has most power over a mind, not occupied by the care, and politics of the great world, and that I in particular, am vulnerable to the soft impressions, yet where is the evil ? she whose grace, and figure, would adorn a court ; whose sense, beauty, and accomplishments are seldom equalled and seldom exceeded, she condescends to think like her Edward ; she wanders with him through his favorite walks, listens with pleasure to the harmony of his natural aviary, sits with content by the side of his clear stream, and blesses his humble roof with her angelic smile ; where then, is thy terror denouncing foresight ? oh thou prophane augurer, come, be a convert, come see how lovely content can be.

The General has sent the credentials of his faith to Lady Mary, and we expect her ladyship will do honor to our nuptials ; but greatly as I respect her, and much as I wish every event that will add to the happiness of General Moncrass, yet *my* wishes, *my* hopes, *my* desires, are all so entirely centered on one dear object, I fear no event that will not deprive me of her, I desire none in which she is not a principal.

You have heard of the generosity of Major Melrose, madame St. Laurens answered his liberal application in my favor, with her full consent ; my Agnes therefore gives her hand to the most grateful of lovers, with her approbation ; her letter to Agnes on the occasion is charming.--- Madam St. Laurens is a bigot to her religion and fears for the faith of my beloved, she
dreads

dreads my influence, but the soul of my Agnes is the temple of purity, sacred be the religious tenets of that heart where never unhallowed idea entered. One whole delicious hour this morning, did my Agnes rest on my shoulder, while I held it for her perusal ; and I kissed, unrepented, the sweet filicide off her glowing cheeks, at every sentence of tenderness, from her respectable friend. Again, and again, I exultingly exclaim what a lot is mine !

The hermitage is enlarging, under the inspection of the Major ; who is so pleased with its present simple appearance, that he will not suffer the architect, who was sent for by the General on purpose to *beautify it*, (his own words) to move without him ; we will make it as much larger, and more convenient as you please, or as you can, Mr. architect, he says, but as to its beauty what alteration you make, must be for the worse.

Julia is here as playful, and more happy than ever : she is now dressing my angel's hair, (you never Butler saw such hair) in a thousand fantastical forms, to make her, the wild thing says, as handsome as Miss Arnold ; but, gaily correcting herself as Mrs. Arnold said, I shall never be solid or wise, else should I stand here, attempting an impossibility. Apropos of the Arnolds.

Lord Morden, whose designs on Miss DeCourci, carried him to Greenwich ; never out of his way, discovering the mistake occasioned by his passionate entreaties, to be admitted to see her ; and probably understanding from the present situation of the Ruthven, and Moncras families, that they would not furnish him, with either wife, or mistress, had the address to turn
his

his fine arts against the simple Nancy Arnold, and actually prevailed on her to elope with him : the scheme was however frustrated, by the sudden return of old Arnold, from one of his short voyages : who arrived at his own door in the instant the noble lord was handing his Nancy into a post-chaise : pushed Miss up the steps, and locked the door : my lord made unlimited use of his well hung tongue, he had a vast deal to say, to very little purpose ; Arnold spoke not a word, but he made a very liberal use of his fists ; in short, his lordship after being rescued by his servants, made a very precipitate retreat to town, carrying with him some marks of Mr. Arnold's resentment, which exposes him to the laugh of the great world.

Poor Arnold, cried the generous Julia, what will become of him if the pride of his heart in his beautiful Nancy is lost ? all that has happened to the nonsensical thing is owing to us ; we should do something for the poor beauty, to put her in conceit with herself, and in good humour with the world ;—a present from the General has accordingly been sent as an acknowledgement for the civilities shewn the ladies ; and a promise of patronage should any of the family need it ; a promise which from General Moncras, is of great value to people who have sons to provide for in the world—nor, Butler, do not you suppose I have forgot the lad who assisted me in preserving my Agnes—*forgot him*, what a thought was that !

Tuesday,

I deferred sending this letter yesterday, as Caroline thought you might possibly be with us, but
yours

yours which she has just received forbid that hope—if it were in nature for me to be sensible of a want of any thing, when near my Agnes, it would be your company ; but I will not profess, what I do not feel ; I certainly wish, most sincerely wish you were here, but while blest with the endearing smiles of my Agnes, no vacuum can possibly subsist, in the soul of your

HARLEY.

L E T T E R XX.

Agnes to Madame St. Laurens.

Thursday,

Belle-Vue.

I Retire from the society of my partial friends, from the fond attention of the most amiable of lovers, to address the dear protectress of my infancy, the beloved and respected guide of my early days, for the last time, before I vow to give that heart, to *man*, which notwithstanding my ardent affection for Harley, I often feel, whether from the early impressions of piety, the natural love I bear your dear sisterhood, or what other cause *I know not, but I do feel it should be devoted to God.* Your consent, madam, is arrived, but what a consent ! it is not given, I see too plain, it comes not from your open heart, with that free grace which distinguishes all your voluntary actions : it is *wrested, extorted, I feel this,* and my heart wants the confidence its own approbation has hitherto insured—but I am overpowered, I only hinted a half formed wish to delay the solemn contract, I was instantly besieged with reproaches that spoke the kindest meaning, and with persuasion which had the power of compulsion ; Harley did not speak—he could not—he sat in breathless agitation—while the gentle Caroline wept, and the lively Julia laughed me out

out of my own judgment ; the General, and madam Vallmont looked seriously displeased ; am *not I a good catholick*, Agnes, said the latter extending her hand ?

I respectfully kissed it in token of assent.

I do not doubt *your* stedfast adherence to your religion

I would not wed her to a prince, with whom I thought it would be endangered, said my uncle, his fine face glowing, and as we are entered on the topic, which tho' I was at first displeased, I begin to think not totally unnecessary, you and I Edward will talk it over ; he then arose and Mr. Harley followed him to his library.

Father Dominick, was requested to attend.

They were a very short time absent.

My Harley, tho' steady in his own faith, warmly disclaimed every idea of warping mine ; he engaged his honor unasked, never to enter on any conversation with me that should lead to religious discussions, and they returned to the drawing room.

My uncle entered with that fine open brow of pleasure which extends its influence to all around.

A charming English poet——Hayley, whose works I believe are not translated, had surely my dear uncle in his mind when he pourtrayed one who

“ Nor moderation's dupe nor faction's brave,
“ Nor guilt's apologist nor flattery's slave,
“ Wise but not cunning, temperate not cold,
“ Servant of truth and in that service bold.”

Oh it is my uncle himself !

I am entering madam, on new duties, new cares, and situations, to which in your calm convent, I was a stranger : the world opens, with every flattering promise to my expectation.

Major

Major Melrose could not be more warmly attached to my Harley, if the tender name of father, (a name alas ! he any more than your Agnes never knew) was added to that of friend ; he has already settled a fine estate on him, and solemnly declares him heir to all his fortune.

Mr. Montford a humorous old merchant, whose riches are immense ; pleased at his alliance with a niece of General Moncras, without being further informed of my story, re-adopts a partiality, which had begun to give way to disgust at the inactive turn of my Edward, and declares him joint heir, with his niece, to all his wealth.

My cruel father died in possession of every thing but honor ; and happiness : unable from his constant disquietude of mind to enjoy the riches he possessed, detested by the woman for whom he abandoned my poor mother, and perpetually harassed by the fear of a discovery, which would have freed Lady Mary from the misery, his tyrannick and unquiet spirit inflicted, he lived a narrow soul'd libertine, on a very small part of his income ; regardless of the accumulations, increasing in the hands of his steward, which were found at his death to be immense, and are, the General says, my right.

Behold me therefore dear lady Abbess, on the point of entering the great world, in possession of full power to gratify every temporal wish : the man I adore doting on me, living but in my smiles, and ready to immolate his vital blood to insure my happiness.

My looks are watched, and my steps followed, for the kind purpose of anticipating my wishes, even before they are formed ; yet my dear madam something still is wanting which neither
the

the fondness of Harley, the kindness of friends, nor the far more impotent power of riches can supply.

Oh St. Clare ! dear injured saint ! thy image follows me in my walks, it is ever present in society, and my dreams are all full of thy sad story : I long to weep with her Victoire over the direful sin of her apostacy, her subsequent misery, and despair, and finally to rejoice with you, at her blessed penitence, and resignation :—how little conscious was I when she received me, from your convent ; that I was for ever leaving our dear sisterhood, that I was to be taken from your protection never to return ; and how much less did I suspect, the fondness of St. Clare, was indeed the tenderness of the best of mothers ;—that I was daughter to the most cruel, the most obdurate of men ; that I was the source of that continual anguish, which made such rapid devastations in the health of my beloved parent.

My heart which beat with a sensation altogether new and pleasing, as we approached the white cliffs of Dover ; was at that time deserted by the soft, the sympathetic sensation, which has often, both before and since, affected my whole frame ; and which at this moment, I presume to say, beats in unison with the mistress of my youth ; yes, madam ; the Major has informed you of the important change tomorrow will make in my fate, and you feel an excess of solicitude ; you recollect a thousand instances of affection on your part, of melting tenderness on that of St. Clare, of juvenile fondness, and gratitude on mine ; your feelings, have something in them at once too painful, and too pleasing for expression.

You tremble at the solemnity of an act which invests a stranger with all power over the child of your adoption ; you feel the awful calm of the present moment, but altho' Providence and fortune seem equally to smile on the future, you abandon the comforts of probability, and you feel all the horrors of the possible :—this then is sympathy, for such are the sensations of your Agnes.

Yet what have I to fear ? father Dominick,—I am interrupted by a summons from my Edward the most tender, the most gentle ; a fond meaning can put into words ; pardon me madam, I leave you, to join him on the lawn, his eyes, swimming in fond expectation, are fixed on my window ; dear amiable youth ! why sinks the heart which is wholly thine, at the idea of to-morrow ? Ah what would my sufferings be were I to be torn from thy arms ? were any fatal accident *now* to divide me from my Harley ?

* * * * *

I am re-assured, I asked comfort and confidence of my Edward ; his voice is the herald of peace, and his tears the sweet oblation which passionate sensibility extorts from the manly bosom : with a mind too elegant in it self to stoop to common forms, Mr. Harley is naturally polite ; his deportment, and address, are too refined, and easy to be either the result of instruction or study : his is the grace of nature ; his person, with no other ornament but a habit of excessive cleanliness, appears always adorned : it is but since he has loved your Agnes that his fine hair has been dressed, and it was so lovely in the garb of rusticity, that I could almost regret the necessity of complying in some degree with custom ;

custom; not that he is less attractive from this alteration, for no outward mode can injure the form of Edward Harley.

My eyes when I joined him were swelled, my tears had dropped on the letter I was addressing to you. This amiable man, Madame, would sink under any calamity that befel your Agnes. What excess of sorrow and apprehension took possession of his features; with what inexpressible tenderness did he chase from my bosom, the said train of ideas, which had taken possession there; dear comforter, he proposes a journey to the continent, as soon after our marriage, as our friends will spare us.

If you love your Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to you said he, be chearful; thy whole life, my Agnes, shall be guarded from disquiet; in the bosom of thy Harley.

"If I love my Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to me." Oh God! thou knowest how dearer than life he is to me, and I will be chearful: I will bless the dearest of men, his wishes shall be gratified, I will no longer suffer the sad retrospect of the past, or dread of the future, to dwell on my mind, and damp the transports of love and generosity.

Father St. Dominick, I was going to inform you, consents to remove to Belle-Vue: General Moncreafs has yet had no regular chaplain, and the good priest will divide his time betwixt our two families: ah madam! are you at a loss to account for my sinking spirits? my Edward is a heretic, avaunt, avaunt ye sickening ideas, he is a christian, he is an honor to his maker.—

My poor mother had not heard I find, neither did the General inform her, of his alliance with

Lady Mary; he generously concealed from *her* the circumstances which rendered her sad story of such importance to him, and his amiable wife; we expect her to-morrow, but should her ladyship not honor us with her presence, her absence will not protract the ceremony; adieu then, dearest madam adieu. For the honor of your protection, the blessing of your instruction, and the benefit of your example, suffer your grateful Agnes on her knees, to thank you; and oh! most honored madam, still continue to me your inestimable affection, still offer to the God you serve prayers for my spiritual, and temporal welfare; and still believe, in every change of time, and circumstance, in every wish, desire, and avocation of my mind; I shall, 'till called hence for ever, be your unalterable

AGNES.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXI.

Mrs. James Butler to J. Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

IT is one of the greatest mortifications I have yet known; that on this day of general jubilee when my heart is ready to burst its little prison, my dear James is prevented from participating in the joy of his fond Caroline; you bid me write, but that was unnecessary, I cannot half enjoy my own happiness, till I impart it to you.

It is now just six o'clock, and even the lazy Julia's bell has rung; is it not pleasant to observe, how the celebration of a wedding enlivens the countenances of all the domestics in a family? they seem to feel their consequence augmented, by their share in the festival. I have amused myself this half hour, in fancying I could read the state of their hearts, as they pass with unusual alertness about the house; the men I conclude are all anticipating their own happiness, when their respective dulcinea's shall consent, and their circumstances will enable them to marry. The damsels I imagine who have not lovers, believe this day will give them one; and those who have, see their fate in that of the lovely Agnes. Of this same Agnes, my dear James, much, very much may be said, and yet leave the description of her beauty and accomplishments far behind: she is already dressed, a fine spotted book muslin coat

and train over a white lutestring, with a blowse cap of the same richly laced, fastened at the top with very valuable pearl pins, earrings, necklaces and bracelets to correspond, are the whole finery of her bridal dress; yet in this simple attire it is impossible to conceive any thing more elegant than her appearance. Edward's cloaths are embroidered in the highest taste, he means his dress as a compliment to the bride, and therefore it is as rich as possible, almost covered with spangles; Julia who has hitherto made no appearance, since her marriage, has her toilet spread with a profusion of Jewels, presents from the General, in such variety, she shall be, she says, at a loss where to place them all; her dress is a beautiful painted Italian crape. You have made me so fine by your last obliging present, that with the addition of my own, and my aunt Montford's jewels, I shall be a little queen of diamonds too; Mr. Moncrafts in compliance with the taste of his wife, will also be richly dressed.

I have peep'd into the bride's dressing room; Edward was on his knees, in the act of worshipping his divinity, her sweet eyes bent on him with such a solemn affection, that I really felt as if I had interrupted devotion, and withdrew immediately: from thence I ran to Julia, who I found up to the ears in business and finery; every chair filled, and she in the midst of it, scolding her woman, for having literally but one pair of hands.

As Lady Mary is not come, the General looks very gloomy; we have not a soul but our own family; Father Dominick performs the ceremony, according to the Romish rites first in the saloon; then we proceed, the General, Edward, Agnes, and myself in the family coach, Mr. Moncrafts
and

and Julia in their new vis-a-vis, Major Melrose, Madam Vallmont, the Rector and his lady in Edward's elegant post-coach :—The inns of four of the nearest villages, are ordered to be open for the entertainment of the populace; and the old, and infirm, served from thence at their own houses.

We have breakfasted, and expect the summons to the saloon every moment :—Edward trembles too much, dear fellow ! he has hardly strength to support the bride.

* * * * *

The popish ceremony as uncle Montford would call it is over—the carriages are drawn up. Adieu.

* * * * *

Well James, joy, joy, to you, to myself, Edward is married: Mrs. Harley, sweet creature ! threw herself into my arms ; but it is impossible to say any more, we are all going to take parts in a little concert. Adieu.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

L E T T E R XXII.

Mrs. J. Butler to James Butler, Esq.

Belle-Vue.

I AM out of breath with terror, the last five hours, my dear James, have exhibited an awful instance of the incertitude of all human events ; and proved, more than volumes of the best writing, the incapacity of weak mortals to judge, or to ask a boon of providence most necessary for their own happiness.

What piles of felicity in our little circle, were gilded by the beams of this morning's sun ; what ruin, what devastations are witnessed by its departing rays——

You must come to us immediately, I foresee, with anguish, your presence will be necessary, on a business more urgent, and perhaps more dreadful, than that of supporting your poor Caroline.

Yet heaven knows she never wanted it so much.

I trust this will find you at L——, but if the assizes are closed there, the express will follow you.

Delay not a moment——

Isaac is an age getting ready, Oh God that my thoughts could but reach you.

Should Edward be come to you—but this is a surmise without hope—take him to London instead of returning with him here, as in that case

I shall

I shall be collected enough to remain where I am, without you, as long as my presence may be necessary.

And

Should the above surmise be happily realised, the best thing that can be done for him, is to persuade him to go abroad.

He will explain this letter.

But if you do not meet him, come, my beloved James, to your fond Caroline, with the utmost speed.

I cannot get that methodical creature, Isaac to hurry, tho' he sees me trembling with impatience.

Yet I have neither spirit, nor composure to tell you our situation.

It is a detail no less prolix, than fatal; the sum indeed might appear in three dreadful words.

But James, tho' my heart is bursting, I cannot help fancying myself at this moment, a greater philosopher than yourself.

The shock it has given me, renders *me* fearful of suddenly alarming *you*—

O thank God Isaac is at last ready, come my dearest life and come safe to

Your

CAROLINE BUTLER..

L E T T E R XXIII.

*Agnes to Madame St. Laurens.**Belle-Vue.*

DEAR blessed friend ! of the miserable Agnes, how will your heart bleed, how are you doomed to suffer from your exalted friendship, your love for the wretched St. Clare, and her more wretched daughter ! yet what have I said ? *more* wretched ! stop presumptuous pen, how dare I who can acquit myself to you, and to God ? how dare I murmur ?

Alas ! alas ! my heart is breaking, I know not to what excess despair may drive me, I need your protection, your consolation, I write to implore it, send I beseech you a lay sister, to fetch me hence ; they will persuade, they will entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man, will command, the insinuating Caroline will weep, and Julia will not be denied ; but ah ! I cannot, cannot stay among them.

No, Victoire ! no ! I have ventured on that tempestuous ocean, where the peace of my poor mother was wrecked ; I stood on the brink of a gulph, which yet gapes for my destruction ; I tremble at the precipice I have-- but have I escaped ? hide me, madam, from the horror of my own ideas.

I was married to--heavenly father I can not say it--I dare not think it.

Dear

Dear ill-fated youth! unhappy! undone Harley! yes madam, tremble: raise your pure heart with mine, to that divine source, where for wise purposes inexplicable to weak mortals, this dreadful mystery was ordained; oh St. Clare! friend! saint! mother! could not all thy piety, thy prayers, and penitence; preserve thy poor orphan, from the horrid, the *unnatural* crime of wedding her own——

I cannot write it—he is gone, he is fled, he hides his anguish in impenetrable secrecy. Alas whither! whither! dear youth! art thou flown! why didst thou leave the warm heart that beat only to God and thee; our misfortunes are the visitation of the most high, we are miserable but we are guiltless.

His heart, madam, is the mansion of rectitude, he is appalled at the guilt into which we were plunging; and am I less affected? do I feel the mystic horror of our fate, less than him? No, but he has not like me, been taught to form a plan of temporal felicity, independent of the passions: he knows not, that even here, in this vale of misery, an unhappy mortal may find a sanctuary from grief, from despair; his religion leads not to such peaceful retreats, as our dear convents.

Oh Edward! why art thou gone? why hast thou left thy Agnes, thy friend? still now, and ever wilt thou be present to my thoughts.

Can I forget the anguish of that fatal moment, when, his frame convulsed, his eyes bursting from their orbit, and his faltering tongue unable to utter any other sound than, “miserable Harley!” lost Agnes!” yet, overpowered by the sense of guilt, he had resolution to tear himself
from

from his Agnes: yes Madame! my arms were innocently, tho' vainly extended to detain him; I saw, tho' ignorant of the cause, his inward conflicts; the iron hand of despair distorted that countenance, where a moment before, every manly grace were seen to shine with unspeakable lustre.

Oh to recal him, to comfort, to support his drooping soul; alas my Edward! and are we parted to meet no more?—shall I no more hear him speak? no more delight in the wisdom, and harmony of his accents? and can it be? Oh too sure, do I not even sin in wishing to behold him!

Oh my sad heart! were I with you, could I rest my aching head on your maternal bosom, yet, even there could I lose the memory of my misfortunes, till the unhappy fugitive is restored to his friends, to the consolation of innocence? No, no! *that* once effected, Edward once more restored to a laudable confidence in himself; how gladly shall I bid this tumultuous, this hateful world adieu.

Send for me, dear Madam, let me return to your protection, oh that I never had left it! that my poor departed mother, had suffered me to offer my vows in expiation of her violated ones; oh! that it had been my happy fate, to have lived in ignorance, and died in peace.

I can no more, my head! my head! shall I die here? shall I expire among people, in a family who were blessed in the world, and in each other, before the miserable Agnes came among them? before the contagion of her misfortunes infected the house of tranquility? my pen drops from my fingers, my head, oh! how it throbs.

An

An amiable creature, the congenial spirit to poor Harley, promises to explain this incoherent letter—this must be the approach of death—every limb is in exquisite torture——dear tender Caroline I resign myself to you——my pen falls. Adieu adieu best - - - -

LETTER

L E T T E R XXIV.

Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Laurens.

Belle-Vue.

DREADFUL, Madam, dreadful to me is the explanation I have promised.

To retrace the scenes which have passed, and which still hang in dark suspense over us, is a task really terrible ; and it is rendered still more so, by the dangerous situation of our dear Agnes ; the agitation of her mind has thrown her into a high fever, but she is yet sensible ; and implores me, with such extreme, such pathetic earnestness, to give you the particular of a story, which nearly destroyed us all, I cannot resist her affecting importunity ; tho' I am extremely indisposed, and very ill able to support myself under the grief, and suspense which I feel at Harley's absence ; but the supplicating looks of the dear Agnes are not to be resisted.

You are informed, Madam, the nuptials were to take place Thursday, and that we were in hourly expectation of Lady Mary's arrival.

The General's anxiety during the separation from his Lady, had materially affected his health ; and the gout, which had only once before attacked him, was removed with difficulty from his stomach into the extreme parts ; it was now fixed on his right foot, which with the weakness a course of medicine had left on his constitution, rendered

rendered it improper, if not dangerous for him to take so long a journey, as from Belle-Vue to Bath ; or it is most probable he would not have waited Lady Mary's arrival here.

After the ceremony, oh madam ! what a ceremony, never shall I forget it, nor will I ever be present at another.

The glow of modesty crimsoned over the cheek of the charming Agnes, but her mind, above the common forms, which influence some brides I have seen of less understanding, conscious of no latent reason to be ashamed of the vow she was taking, communicated its dignity to her countenance ; her bright eyes met those of the transported Harley, as with a fine mellow low voice, but perfectly distinct, she pronounced the solemn, " I Agnes, take thee, Edward," and with equal presence of mind, she went through all her part of the awful contract.

To describe Edward must be to have seen him, oh my poor ! poor brother !

After the ceremony we met in the saloon : the General plays capitally on the violoncello, and I need not say to *you* that Agnes on the harp is harmony itself ; I sat to the organ, Edward took his flute, we were all musical — even Madame Vallmont and father Dominick bore a part in one of Bach's fine compositions. — The door flew open — and my mother rush'd in, all pale and trembling — followed by my uncle Montford.

We expected Mrs. Butler would have accompanied Lady Mary, her terrific countenance, and agitation : therefore alarmed us on her account.

How is my wife, where is Lady Mary, dear
Constance

Constance say but is she well ? cried the General, and we all crowded round her.

She threw herself on a chair, and asked faintly for a glass of water ; before it could be got, tears seemed to relieve her, but she was some time incapable of speaking.

The General's gout was no more remembered, he stamped in agony ; Speak, Constance, for God's sake relieve me from this dreadful suspense ; where is my Mary, my wife ?

Mrs. Butler, as soon as she could speak, begged the General would not alarm himself ; his Lady was not ill, not dangerously ill, she was as well as—as——

As what madam, speak I conjure you, as what ? interrupted the General, trembling, and in the same instant ringing the bell—

Dear General do not thus alarm yourself ; Lady Mary's greatest malady *now*, is her concern for you, yet she is indisposed.

A servant appeared, the horses were ordered to be put to the travelling chaise ; for *me*, said the General, is she distressed for *me* ? let me fly to her.

Mr. Montford had in the mean time walked with Harley across the saloon ; a scream from Agnes called my attention from Mrs. Butler, to her where I saw—

Good God ! how shall I describe the anguish of that moment.

My uncle had an open letter in his left hand, the fore finger of his right was in the act of pointing out to Harley the contents of what was written on the paper, but Edward had already heard enough ; he stood, his eyes cast upwards with such horrid earnestness, the whites only were visible ;

sible; his features were distorted with inward convulsion; drops of sweat rolled down his forehead, his brows were contracted, his hands clasped together, and never was there seen, so striking an emblem, of hopeless distraction.

Poor Agnes! whose attention was first excited with ours about Mrs. Butler; had it soon mournfully engaged by a more interesting object; she marked the changes in his countenance, 'till his senses appeared to forsake him, it was then she shrieked, and ran to clasp her arms around the lost Edward.

In vain for some time, were all her efforts to rouse him from this distressing torpidity of soul; she called on him by the tenderest appellations, her own Edward, her dearest Harley, her husband.

At that he started, tears gush'd from his eyes, and oh! what groans, what direful groans rent his bosom; Miserable undone Edward! cried he, again straining his eyes upwards, then suddenly fixing them on her, lost, lost Agnes!

Edward—dear Edward what means my more than life? Oh whence this horrid distraction? and again she was throwing her arms around him.—

With a look, heavenly God! what a look—he disengaged himself from her fond grasp, and twisting his hands in his fine hair, which he pulled out by the roots, and scattered as he went, ran out of the house with such celerity, and we were all so stupified, so afraid of enquiring, yet so eager to know what had caused such a sudden revolution, from the excess of happiness, to the extreme of misery, that he was not followed,
till.

'till he was out of sight and no one could tell the path he had taken. —

The Major and the Rector went immediately to the Hermitage, he had not been seen there, nor have we since heard of him; but to return to the dreadful exposition.

Agnes threw herself into my arms, and wildly demanded why her Harley had left her? where he was gone? and what was the cause of this tempest in a mind, which was wont to be hush'd into infant mildness at the voice of his Agnes.

Too, too soon were her enquiries answered. —

Ah madam! you who are a saint on earth, whose soul already participates in the serene joys of the blessed, even *you* could not have borne this scene, without lamenting that two of the most lovely, and most deserving of God's creatures, should be thus rendered the most unhappy.

You have heard from Major Melrose, in his application for your sanction, to the marriage of Edward Harley, to Miss De Courci, all that we knew of that young man's history—My aunt Montford bred him as her own son, and my mother who had married imprudently, dying when I was in my infancy, she had also the goodness to adopt me: we were thus brought up together, and the fraternal love he ever evinced for me, was returned by the warmest sisterly attachment.

During the life of Mr. Neville, the acquaintance which had subsisted between my aunt's family, and that at Belle-Vue, was entirely dropped: it was very seldom that charming seat was visited by Mr. Neville, and when it did happen, Mrs. Montford did not chuse to give him the trouble

trouble of refusing to let Lady Mary be seen by her, it being his invariable custom to deny his Lady to all her old friends.

On Mr. Neville's death however, my aunt was amongst the first who paid her respects to the noble widow; and then presented to her young Harley—who, from that period became a great favourite with her ladyship.

Mr. Neville, Madam, I need not inform you, was a man of dissolute manners——He had early in life seduced a young ward of his father's—Miss Woodburne—whose brother fell in his attempt to punish the destroyer of his sister's honor.

The poor girl lost her reason when the tidings of his death, and Neville's flight was told her, she left her guardian's house, and became an insane wanderer; in that situation——but I cannot go on——I must get Mr. Dominick to transcribe Mrs. Montford's letter to Lady Mary, which she wrote during her last illness; I will then, if I am able, resume my pen, at present I can only entreat you will pray for Agnes, for Harley, for the distressed friend and sister of both,

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXV.

Mrs. Ann Montford to Lady Mary Moncreaf.

(Inclosed in the preceding letter, copied by father Dominick.)

Hermitage.

My dear Lady Mary,

THE cancer which has so many years afflicted me, is no longer to be parried by the art of medicine. I always knew it would be my end; the formidable advances it now makes on my constitution, and the impossibility of repelling it, are omens of a speedy dissolution, I cannot misinterpret—my worldly affairs are all arranged, except the secret you have so often solicited me to reveal respecting my dear Edward: I told you it should not die with me; no, Lady Mary, I am too much interested in his future welfare, to conceal from you a story that will make you his friend, when I am no more—you will have an old maid's confession—but no matter—you may arraign her folly but you will acquit her of guilt.

How has it escaped your observation, Lady Mary, that my Edward is the image of your late husband? Of the only man I ever loved.

When Mr. Neville was first your mother's favorite at Belle-Vue, my heart was enslaved by his exterior perfections, I loved him from a youth,
and

and through all the changes of his variable fortune; how he, whose vanity was so great, came not to take advantage of my partiality, is not so easily understood, but I believe he never suspected it; as the little civilities he paid me were free from design, he was not at the trouble to conceal any of his sentiments; his mind I remember I used to think was undressed when he conversed with me, but it was like the dishabille of a beautiful woman when unadorned, most attractive; I excused his vices when they would admit it, and I studied his follies, till they became as natural to me as my own.

But when Miss Woodburne's affair came out, that was too gross even for me to pardon; and the conviction of his abandoned principles, affected my spirits so much, I was glad to accept my brother's invitation to visit his Somersetshire estates, in hopes I should get rid, by change of scene, of the melancholy I was falling into.

My brother was always partial to me, he rode, walked; and indeed devoted his whole time to my amusement.

We were one evening, strolling down a meadow, by the side of a river near his house, when we saw a young woman plunge into the stream from the opposite side; my brother ran immediately to her assistance, nor was I far behind him. The river, fortunately as the weather had long been dry, was shallow; and my cries which were heard by the domestics, hastened them to us; they assisted in getting the body to my brother's house, where notwithstanding the first medical skill we could procure, it was four hours before she was pronounced out of danger.

My

My brother was struck with her beauty, but the melancholy in which she was totally absorbed, was an attraction to me far more potent, he *saw* she was handsome, but I *felt* she was unhappy.

Instead of thanking, she reproached us for preserving her; yet we persevered in our kindness, we saw she was well bred, and could not doubt but her origin was respectable, although we had likewise every reason to suppose she had been imprudent, as she was very visibly pregnant.

Her intellects were touch'd, she would often rave, and oftener keep a profound silence—but she had intervals which exhibited a most amiable mind; she was naturally tender, and grateful, and her acknowledgments for our kind *intentions*, a distinction she would always make, increased the affection we felt for her.

Quiet, and attention, by degrees, restored her to her reason; she then acquainted us, she was the ruined Miss Woodburne, of whom we had heard too much.

Poor meek creature, she could not support herself under the accumulated weight of guilt, and sorrow, when her brother's death was added to her own ruin, her agonies were too acute for her intellectual faculties; she flew from her guardian—your uncle Neville, and had been wandering about the country, avoiding the high-roads, and hiding from the sight of her fellow creatures, who she fancied were in pursuit of her, as the murderers of her brother, till the moment in which prompted by fear, and despair, she had sought to end her wretched being; she concluded her affecting story, with entreaties that we would not discover her to her guardian, but suffer her to breathe her last with us; and not abandon

don her guiltless infant, when it became an inhabitant of the earth.

We engaged to fulfil all her behests, and endeavour'd to banish the despair which had taken possession of her, but without success; she lived only to bring her child into the world.

My partiality for Mr. Neville has never been, notwithstanding his libertine character, wholly eradicated; with *his* graceful form and insinuating manners on my mind, it is little wonder my heart continued inaccessible to any other of his sex; and so, I am an old maid.

Again I cannot help asking, how it could escape your observation? For never were there two created beings, that more resembled each other, than Mr. Neville and my Edward; he has the fine figure, and understanding of his father, without his vices; and I actually am cherishing my first passion for Neville, while I indulge my fondness for Edward; a confession, that may perhaps, and that in no small degree, lessen the opinion your Ladyship have been pleased to entertain of the urbanity of those motives, by which you supposed me to be actuated, in my conduct towards him.

Without knowing the claims he *should* have on Mr. Neville's fortune, you have promised, Lady Mary, to patronize my boy, when Ann Montford is no more: and the reliance I have on your word, is a comfort I would not part with on any terms; you will not I am sure, for *I know you*, be less his friend, for the discovery I have made of his mother's misfortune and of his father's depravity. —

I attended, at her dying request, her remains to Gloucestershire, and saw her corpse laid at the feet of her father.

Her

Her fortune, and her brother's estate, to which she was heir, were very considerable; but, as she was under age, it was not in her power to settle any part of either on her son, neither could he, who was illegitimate, inherit it; *he* therefore, could derive no advantage from a discovery of his mother's shame; and to own the truth, I did not wish to divide my right to the young orphan, with any other person; I therefore left the village church, without answering a single question concerning the deceased, and returned to the Hermitage with my dear charge.

You know, Lady Mary, how abundantly I think myself overpaid, for my care of this boy; by the gratitude, and affection he bears me, and how I exult in his personal, as well as mental graces.

I divide my little fortune between him, and Caroline Brookes, only child of an unfortunate sister who married a man totally unworthy of her; but he also is dead, I will not therefore say more on that head, than that my brother, as partial to Edward as myself, engages to dispose of his large fortune in the same manner I have left my small one.

The mind of Edward Harley has been formed, and his talents cultivated under my inspection; you knew his tutor the excellent Doctor Allen.

I am perfectly satisfied with his disposition myself; but ah! Lady Mary, while gratifying my own peculiar turn in the embellishment of his mind, I forgot perhaps he must be like other men; he is now only virtuous, honest, and honorable, “ I took that season of life when the
“ soul as yet unhacknied in the ways of men,
“ is susceptible of every fine impression, when
“ the sublime and beautiful of virtue, inflame it
“ with

“ with a laudable enthusiasm, and worldly passions had not yet entangled it in their snares,” to model his inclination and lead his taste.

But in a world, where the innocence of the dove, should be entwined with the guile of the serpent, with that warmth of feeling, that exquisite sensibility, what will become of him.

Take him, Lady Mary, I beseech you under your protection; without, if possible to avoid it, disclosing to him his disgraceful birth, which his poor mother begg’d he might never know.

Should I not again have the happiness to see you, Lady Mary, suffer my extreme illness to be an apology for this trouble--my surgeon talks of the knife, but I will not submit to the operation, and my complaint is mortal.

Yet I trust I shall again see the dear friend I now with reluctance part with.

May your comforts, dear Lady Mary, increase with your years; may your faultless example, excite in your lovely Julia, a desire to emulate, she never can excel her valuable mother.

May the worthy General continue to deserve you--human perfection can go no farther.

While the venerable Earl is spared to the most affectionate of daughters, may he be blessed with health, and spirits; and when it shall please the Almighty to call him hence, may you, Lady Mary, bear the short separation, with the fortitude and resignation, which has hitherto rendered your character, a model of female perfection.

Adieu Madam, once more let me recommend my Edward to your patronage, and I know you will sometimes condescend to enquire after my pretty Caroline--but she has relations--Edward none--you will also, sometimes remember

ANN MONTFORD

VOL. II.

K

LETTER

L E T T E R XXVI.

Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Lawrens.

In continuation.

THUS then madam, you perceive, how from a combination of events, and from a concealment which no human policy could predict would end thus miserably, Edward and Agnes are undone.

The tenderness which reciprocally attached the wretched pair to each other, would, had they known their consanguinity, have stopped at the fraternal bond; but mutually amiable—charming in their persons—elegant—delicate—and brilliant in their understandings; the first favorable impression encreased by degrees, 'till it ended in a passion too potent to be subdued by reason, lessened by time, or transferred to any other object.

In Harley it had indeed taken early and deep root, it was a part of himself, and what may be the consequence of the discovery to him, I tremble to think.

My greatest fear for Agnes, arises from the delicacy of her constitution.

Her love for Edward would I am convinced have stood the test of time, or any change of circumstances; but should her invaluable life be spared from the ravages of the fever, I think we may hope, that her mind untainted with guilt,
and

and unappalled with inward reproaches, will in time, recover the shock it has received.

Her innate principles, look not to externals, her God, and her conscience are the umpire of her actions, to them she makes her appeal, and she will consider the discovery, late as it was made, as the peculiar intervention of Heaven, to preserve her from an union so retrograde to humanity.

She will not I venture to predict, admit another inmate to her bosom ; her plan of passing through life was made, and all her ideas of happiness formed, before she left your convent.

Her love for Harley, while it engrossed her passions, could not wholly reconcile her to the world ; tho' courted to its enjoyments by the object of her fond affections, who also doated on her.

She is now she says convinced of the wisdom of her first plan, and deplores that she ever abandoned it, for one so illusory.

She will not be prevailed on to stay amongst us ; no, madam ! you will again receive your Agnes, she will be yours for ever ; and we shall recollect her as a heavenly vision which just passed our sight and vanished.

She will indeed leave an impression, no time can erase ; but she will be lost to us, we shall see her no more ; she is at this instant earnestly praying that she may be spared to return to your convent, to die at your feet.

The good Priest prays by, and comforts her—but what is become of him she cries ? Oh where is my Edward ? She is incessantly enquiring if I, if the Major, or any body has heard of him ? If we can form no conception where he is gone ?—Would to God ! we could.

Three days ago Belle-Vue was a scene of joy and

and festivity, it is now frightful, and gloomy as a desert.

When Lady Mary came to the part of St. Clare's history, which discovers Neville to be her husband and the father of Agnes; the idea of the unnatural marriage which it might be perhaps too late to prevent, struck her so forcibly she fell into hysteric fits which continued 'till after my mother joined her at Bath, with intention to accompany her hither.

Mrs. Butler was informed by her woman of the packet Lady Mary had received, for she was unable to speak herself, but altho' she could presume so much on the friendship subsisting between them, as to read the contents, and altho' she was herself extremely shock'd at the baseness of Neville, and affected by the misfortunes of St. Clare, she owned she was surprized it should have so great an effect on Lady Mary.

But when that lady sufficiently recovered, to be able to reveal the real source of her grief, there required little persuasion to prevail on Mrs. Butler, who is one of the most humane creatures breathing, to set off express to Belle-Vue and break the matter to the General. Mr. Montford was at his seat in Somersetshire, and as the road to Belle-Vue passed it, Lady Mary in a short note requested he would accompany her.

My dear mother, ever active in the cause of benevolence, tho' long an invalid, forgot all her own complaints, and travelled two hundred and fifty miles across the country, without stopping longer than to change horses, in hopes to be in time to prevent the marriage. She left her Ladyship confined to her bed, which when the General understood, he set off to Bath with Julia, leaving his son to escort Mrs. Butler; who was

too much concerned for her friend to stay from her, while she was in such a situation; tho' she, was unable to travel back with the same expedition she had come to Belle-Vue.

All that the most tender parent could say, in alleviation of the misfortunes of this unhappy brother, and sister, and in solemn promise of unceasing paternal fondness, and protection did General Moncrafts say to his lovely niece; who urged his hasty departure to his wife, and implored him to prevail on Lady Mary to believe, she lamented the incessant trouble, she was the innocent cause of to her—Sweet creature! she endeavoured to conceal the anguish of her heart, from her uncle, and promised him, she would make herself as easy as the nature of her situation would admit.

Mrs. Moncrafts was visibly divided between duty to the best of mothers, and compassion for her distressed friend; the former however, as it was fit, prevailed.

Mr. Moncrafts, and Mrs. Butler followed the General and Julia early the next morning; they all earnestly recommended the unfortunate bride, to the peculiar care of Mrs. Vallmont and myself.

Major Melrose who loves Edward as his son, is continually on horseback in search of him—but if he yet, live—ah me! what a surmise was that—He has probably left England.

I have wrote to Mr. Butler, who I know will leave every other business, the moment he receives my letter, and come to join his endeavours with the Major to trace the poor fugitive; I know *his* influence over the mind of Harley, is greater than that of any other person; perhaps I might add too, with all respect to the Major, who is an excellent character, his feelings

would be more congenial to the anguish of the dear Edward ; could we but find him.

* * * * *

Saturday evening.

Agnes continues so ill that I want heart to send away this letter ; and oh ! my own sad forebodings ; hitherto a stranger to any distress, absent from my beloved husband, and thus robbed of the dear companion of my infancy, how unfit am I to be the scribe on such an occasion.

Monday.

Nothing but sorrow ; Agnes lives, but that is all ; Lady Mary's life is, we hear in danger from a bilious attack, the General relapsed, and Mrs. Butler in the utmost distress—she doats on Lady Mary.

Tuesday.

My Butler is thank God arrived, safe, and well, some comfort in that ; dear generous creature ! he is in agonies for Harley.

Wednesday.

I congratulate you, and rejoice myself, our Agnes is better ; the crisis of her fever was favorable.

Her physicians order her to be kept very quiet ; and flatter us if she does not relapse, the worst is now past ; I do not suffer a breath to be heard, no not my sighs for Edward,——unhappy Edward !

Mr. Butler is gone to the Hermitage, tho' hopeless of success, to renew the enquiries already made in that neighbourhood, after our dear

wanderer ;

wanderer ; he has he says, sometimes a latent hope he is gone abroad ; yet he trembles at his name, his fears are grounded on a thorough knowledge of his friend, those fears, oh madam ! they want a name.

Thursday.

Mrs. Butler writes by desire of the General and Lady Mary, to request all possible care may be taken of Agnes ; that she may be considered as the heiress of Mr. Neville, addressed by his name, and in every respect treated as the General's nearest relation.

But what are appellations, or form, to such a mind as her's ? Who that knows her will suppose she would at such a time as this, be interested about mere hereditary possessions ? No, madam—*your* Agnes, *my* Agnes cannot now receive a consolation, in which the mind does not share.

Ah Caroline ! said she just now, when I read to her Mrs. Butler's letter ; tell me that Edward is found, that he lives, and resigns himself to the will of his Maker ; that his heart is purified from an incestuous passion, that he acknowledges his sister, his unfortunate sister, joint heir with him to the direful consequence of the crimes of their unnatural father—and I will hail thee as the patriarch of old did the returning dove ; thy voice will be musick to the sad soul, where fear and desolation dwells ; but, 'till I know *his* fate, 'till I am sure *he* exists, 'till I am certain he is restored to peace ; what are names, but sounds in which I delight not ? what are riches but trash I cannot enjoy ? And what are temporal honors but snares to a mind unfortified by religion ? Edward, continued she, clasping her uplifted hands, return,

return to thy friends, thy home, let me see thee happy, and then with what joy shall I resign in thy favor, all my right to the wealth of him who destroyed *thy* mother, and murdered *mine* — My home is at the convent D —, the relatives of my heart live there, in the practice of piety, in the service of the blessed Virgin; *there* I should be welcomed with transport were I to return to them, stript of every earthly good, but my honor — Blessed sanctuary for the broken-spirited — holy asylum for the offspring of iniquity — how do I long once more to join our heavenly choir. —

This woman, this Agnes is already soaring above mortality; when I hear her melodious voice uttering religious rhapsodies, I feel a kind of solemn awe I cannot describe; a respect, a veneration.

But *true religion*, respected lady Abbess, however different in outward professions, and in form of worship, is I believe one invariable impulse, over the whole face of the creation; how indeed should it fail to be so? since the source from whence it arises is the same, the beneficence of the Father of the universe, is equally extended to all the inhabitants of the earth, it is a thankful sense of *his* unceasing goodness, *his* inexhaustible mercy, and *our own* unworthiness, that lays the foundation of all religious sentiments.

The Indian, whose mind cannot boast that expansion, we of the enlightened world receive from the holy scripture, instruction, and example; pays *his* adoration to the glorious sun, he hails the returning light with thankful rapture; and his soul prostrates itself in love and gratitude at the shrine from whose genial warmth, he supposes every

every good proceeds; this then in *him* is *true religion*.

We know, we feel, we owe all our earthly blessings to a superior Power; and the greatness, the sublimity, the glory, the mercy of that Being, who from such an immensity of distance, such superiority of wisdom, condescends to pay attention to the wants of the meanest reptile that creeps on the earth; must fill us with a stronger sense of true religion, in proportion to the larger share of reason with which he has been pleased to endow us.

So that, madam; it is no small happiness to me, to be assured from my own feelings that *you* in your cloister, our dear *Agnes* and *myself*; have all the same sense of the divine goodness, are animated by the same thankful piety, and shall all be ultimately received into the celestial joy of the same God.——

Pardon, madam, this unsolicited confession of faith, it is extorted by my love for *Agnes*, and my desire to be mentally admitted to the friendship of madam St. Lawrens.

Agnes, or as the General commands, Miss Neville, being now, God be praised, better, and continuing to recover, I congratulate her friends at the convent of D——, on the happy turn her fever has taken, and beg leave to subscribe myself

Madam,

Your respectfully obliged,

Humble servant,

C. BUTLER.

L E T T E R XXVII.

*Agnes to Madame St. Laurens.**Belle-Vue.*

ONCE more, madam, the child of sorrow addresses her best friend; her view of an eternity that had no horrors in it to her, but which seemed on the contrary to invite her sad spirit to rest, closes; and she returns, reluctant, and hopeless, to the temporal concerns, which must be arranged, before she finally leaves a world where her peace has been sacrificed to transient good and permanent evil.

I am yet weak, I dare not look back—the retrospect would incapacitate me for the task, which justice, and duty demands.

To ask your opinion, and wait its arrival, would detain me here too long; it would not only rob me of many hours of rest in your arms, but inflict an equal degree of heightened sorrow, by prolonging my stay in a family, whose tranquillity will be restored, when I have for ever left it.

I have sent for an English attorney, madame Vallmont is his ostensible employer: any visible preparations for my departure from hence would afflict the generous friends, whose kindness increases with my sorrows; Mr. Butler eloquently persuades, and his amiable wife weeps as she folds me to her bosom; they soothe, they entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man! already lays plans for
my

my future greatness, and his noble wife prides herself on the restitution of all my father's fortune, generous woman!

My intention is to make a legal renunciation of the riches which have been fatal to me, and which I never can want. Were there no other claimant; were not the rights of my sister, of the sweet Julia! incontestible, altho' our father's depravity would perhaps deprive her of a legal title—I might reserve some part of his immense wealth, for charitable uses; I might devote it to the pious purpose of having mass continually offered for his soul; but God will, I humbly trust, preserve *me* from the mistake, I have so often heard *you* condemn: the Judge of the universe, the Fountain of mercy, will not accept the produce of injustice, or the gleanings of avarice, however charitably or piously bestowed, in expiation of mortal sin; no! the offerings acceptable to the Saviour of man, are those which come from the purified heart—yes the heart which has itself, done justice, and loved mercy; may approach the altar of God, with sacrifice, and such only will be accepted.—

In the conviction then, Madam, that it is simply an act of common justice, I am anxious to secure to Julia, the fortune to which she is before Heaven, undoubted heir *after* me—after me did I say—oh! that I had ever remained in ignorance of my care-crowned rights, that I had existed only for the service of my Maker, the fond solicitude of dear St. Clare for my temporal welfare, has been the bane of my happiness.

Ah Madam! do you not tremble at the abyss of anguish into which I was on the point of plunging? The marriage vows had passed my lips,

lips, nature groans at the recollection ; father Dominick declares me absolved from the sin I unknowingly committed, but my wounded spirit still dwells on the enormity of those evils, which but for the interposing mercy of Providence might have marked that fatal vow with unutterable horror.

Merciful God ! I thank thee, I will devote the remainder of my days to thy praise—One, one only prayer have I to offer to thee, I prostrate myself before thee, I cry to thee in the anguish of my soul, oh spare, protect, restore the unhappy, the innocent partner of my guilt ; give me to know he yet lives, blast not his youth with the agonies of despair—save him from the temptations of hopeless sorrow—Oh ! be his safeguard against himself—suffer not the brightest of thy works to fall a sacrifice to sin.

My eyes flow with tears, they drop on my paper, you perceive the traces, my sight is dim'd, oh whither has his perturbed spirit borne the dear, the amiable Edward ? Mr. Butler, his bosom, his confidential friend, a young man who honors his own heart by his anxiety for Harley, trembles for him ; he is perpetually seeking, yet dreading to find him ; pale fear sits on his cheek at every sound of the gate bell, he wants the resolution to ask the business of any stranger that arrives ; and his amiable wife, who is tenderness and delicacy itself, nurtured by the same breast, fed by the same hand, and early taught the same principles as my unfortunate brother, is actually the philosopher from whom we all learn fortitude.

Madame de Vallmont harrassed by our perpetual uneasiness, sick of this world, and aspiring to a future, resolves to be my companion to

D—;

D—; if therefore you have not already sent the lay-sister, there will be no occasion; Madame de Vallmont is a woman of honor, great knowledge of the world, and used to travel; I shall be safe in her protection, and benefited by her society.

* * * * *

The attorney has been here and I have legally renounced all claims on the fortune of my unhappy father in favor of Julia.

This is a step, my dear Lady Abbess, you will not perhaps at first approve; because I know it is your wish to have the fame of my dear mother vindicated, by the public justice done her daughter.

There appears I confess to have been a time when that motive had great weight with *her*: but dear Madam, the only real disgrace on *her* character, was that of having broken her first vows to Heaven; every calamity which succeeded *that sinful act*, were the natural consequences of it: and you see that a public avowal and proof of her marriage, serves only to render the memory of the dead hateful, and to involve a noble, and innocent family in shame and distress; without accomplishing the fond mother's wish, of rendering her child happy.

The misfortunes of the family of Moncrass, had so sunk them in the memory, as well as estimation of the world; that those who remember the elopement of my mother from the convent at Portugal, recollect only her apostacy; they do not trouble themselves to search out of what family she was.

My

My uncle's honor, spotless as the brightest day, and unclouded by a single deviation from the strictest rectitude, still supports the ancient virtue of his ancestors.

After him comes the amiable, the sensible, the elegant Moncras his son, whose youth opens with every promise, to succeed his father in honor as in name.

How then Madam can the revival of the story of the forgotten Agnes, whose crime must be repeated as often as her injuries are remembered, and in the estimation of every member of our holy church, be considered as the primary source of her misfortunes? How can it add to the honor of her family?

She is no more—the ghastly smile of malice, the mysterious air of calumny, which affects to conceal what it knows, and would appear tender of the heart it wishes to stab, no longer injures *her*—All the mighty the important ills of mortality have passed away—the world itself appears to *her* but as a little speck in the immensity of space—*her* offence is pardoned—*she* rests in peace, in the bosom of her God—and her pure soul is uncontaminated by one vindictive thought.

This renunciation then concerns not St. Clare, it is your Agnes *only* who resigns what she can never enjoy; she gives up the treasure, the habitation of the wicked, and does not holy writ actually pronounce, that these shall become desolate!—The soul which has been formed, the mind which has been cultivated by Madame St. Laurens, dares seek *her* treasure where the moth cannot corrupt, and conscious that she was created for nobler purposes, looks down on all the kingdoms of the earth: in this act Madam, there is besides
true

true wisdom, it is even the result of that self-love, to which all mankind have a propensity. I gratify my own heart without offending my Maker.

Major Melrose will provide amply in addition to what he has already done for my—oh Madam!—*my brother*—to Julia therefore my amiable, my charming sister, the daughter of my father, have I resigned all my pretentions.

Were not my recovery retarded by my uncertainty of the fate of my Edward, I should be soon, very soon on my way to D——; I have not informed my uncle of the step I have taken, with respect to my fortune; nor given him or any one of the family, but madame de Vallmont, a hint how soon I mean to leave England; because I am sure their mistaken affections, would wish to detain me; mistaken indeed! beloved friends! you love your Agnes, you wish her happy; but would restrain her from taking the only path that in her estimation will lead to peace.

* * * * *

I am so far recovered, that I have ventured to walk on the lawn, and feel the more air I take, the sooner I shall be able to set out;—no tidings yet of Harley, Mr. Butler, and his sweet wife have again been at the Hermitage, he has not been seen there:—well, God's will be done, I will not close this letter, 'till I can announce the time of my departure.

* * * * *

I have rode round this beautiful seat in a small cabriole, Mr. Butler was so polite as to drive me;—

me ;—he is a most amiable young man — no language can describe the painful sensations I endured, when thro' the opening of the trees I saw the white buildings at the Hermitage ; poor Edward ! how often has he directed my eye to the spot, where he formed his visionary plans of happiness— does he exist ? Is he yet among the living ?

* * * * *

Well Madam, my strength returns, my soul pants for your society, three days hence I leave Belle-Vue for ever.

Mr. Butler is inexpressibly polite, he invited us to take our tea in a small summer-room, on the brink of a delightful river which rolls its crystal waves along several miles of green enamelled banks ; and is the same that passes by the Hermitage, and supplies the stream and founts which decorate that delightful retreat— On the point of a rugged precipice which hangs at the extremity of the grove over this river—poor Edward had a neat gothic library, which he named the cell of contemplation :—

“ Close by the cell a glassy mirror flow'd,
 “ Whose stream was shelter'd with a waving wood,
 “ ————— The inner part display'd
 “ A cool retreat amidst surrounding shade :—
 “ So thick the twining branches nature wove,
 “ No light, no sun could reach the dusky grove.”

It was filled with books, and musical instruments, and this was the place where he received my uncle and me, at our first visit.

May I, dear madam, with innocence retrace the days that are *no more* ?

We

We surprized the young Philosopher, as he was called, the General commanded me previous to our going, to endeavour to prevail on him to quit the inactive life he adopted, in opposition to the wishes of all his friends.

On our arrival at the Hermitage, not finding him in the house, we sauntered after the servant, to the place I have described, there in the enjoyment of peace, and the pursuit of wisdom, we found — *my brother* —

Edward Harley, Madam, is the mildest, yet at the same time the most intrepid of men.

I attempted to obey the General, but the place, the scene, the silent eloquence of Harley, instead of convincing *him*, subdued *me*.

At different times afterwards he prevailed on me to give him drawings to ornament this favorite spot, and in memory of my first gift erected a small white obelisk in front of it, sacred to friendship; thither after my return to Belle-Vue, would the irresistible pleader often tempt me to go with him; there have we spent whole hours and there alas! what splendid, what inexhaustible schemes of happiness did he not form. —

The river, the stream therefore which smoothly glides, and gently laves the sides of our summer-room at Belle-Vue, is the same that rushes at the Hermitage, over incredible large stones, and forms a natural cascade, just above the library, ah my friend! what sensations did this recollection give rise to, it was by plunging into a river the mother of my Edward would have precipitated her soul into eternal ruin; how would he have been affected had he known her sad story; with what horror would he have retreated from the bank on which he delighted to recline!

Oh

Oh how unconscious of guilt, how fearless of danger was he at our last excursion to his favorite cell ;—my tears dropped into the clear stream as I sadly retraced those tranquil moments, after my aching eyes had vainly sought him among the trees where he usually waited for me.

The music, which was *penferosa*, gave additional solemnity to the scene ;—they fear'd I should be too much affected, and would drag me away ; but I find my mind more composed after this little excursion, and have prevailed on them to indulge me with a second summer-house visit to-morrow.

* * * * *

I am infinitely better my dear madam to-day—have been favored with most affectionate letters from the General, Lady Mary, and Mr. and Mrs. Moncrafts ; they wish me to join them at Bath—and Mrs. Butler is invited as well as Madame Vallmont,——I do not mean to answer those flattering proofs of affection, till I do it from Paris. I know my uncle will oppose my return to you, he offers to my view a thousand temptations ; but where is the merit of a rejection that accords with my only hope ? I am entitled to retire from the world, oh how dreadful have been the lessons of experience, it has taught me !

Obliging Mr. Butler ! affectionate Caroline ! friendly Melrose !—I attend you for the last time—I dare not disclose my purpose to them, yet how often will my heart beat with gratitude, and true friendship to each ; how painful will my sensations be, when I reflect, we never may meet again.

Madame

Madame Vallmont takes care of our conveyance, I have settled all my private affairs ; and send this letter off, that it may inform you, how soon my poor tempest-beaten heart, will ask consolation, and repose, with God and you.

AGNES.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXVIII.

James Butler Esq. to Mrs. Dowager Butler.

Belle-Vue.

I AM call'd on by manly fortitude, by duty, and by friendship ; to combat with patience the pangs of unutterable grief : uncommon exertions are expected from reasonable beings, when they are assailed by uncommon calamities ; this my dear mother is one of the invaluable lessons you have taught your children, not more by precept than example ; I venerate your wisdom, but cannot imitate it.

I am here among beings, who are sinking under the visitation of providence ; they look to *me* for *consolation*, to *me* who am least able, either to give or receive it ; they beseech me to write, Oh ! my dear mother on what a subject ; they think it is proper the General should be informed of our situation, which is so dreadful it will need all your prudence to break it to him, so as to soften the woes it will inflict, so as to arm him against those, that — will too probably follow.

Edward Harley Madam is no more.

Had grief, had disease deprived me of my friend, my tears would have bedewed his urn, I should have lamented his early fate, but secure in the uprightness of his principles, I should have consoled myself in the assurance that *of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

But

But now he is indeed lost, he has rush'd unbidden into the presence of his creator; *he* who never injured mortal, whose existence was one continued scene of benevolent kindness, whose religion was worthy of the God that made him, *he* has in his *last act*, abjured the mercy of the judge of the world.

Dear Lady Mary, what a task is hers! she only can prepare the good General, for the sad trial which I fear awaits him. True religion, Madam, never appeared so amiable to me, as at this moment, it is thence, we must now derive consolation, all mortal expedients are vain.

But I must be more explicit, the painful recital is assigned to me, because no other person here *can* undertake it.

Agnes was gaining strength, both of mind and person; the fever had left her; her lovely countenance began to be re-animated by that perfect bloom, which rendered her fairest, among the fair; yet the melancholy which anxiety for the fate of Harley has occasioned still remained; she no longer trembled at his name, but a fixed sorrow seem'd to fill her mind; she was absent, and gloomy when we could prevail on her to join our soulless parties; *we* strove indeed to appear chearful, but our dreadful forebodings were too visible to escape her observation.

She was every day engaged at her pen, in her own apartment 'till evening, when we prevailed on her to air in the park; the first of these little excursions not only amused, but pleased her; I had previously ordered the musical instruments to be removed to the summer-room, and had placed some oratorios on the forte piano; she immediately selected the Messiah, and began the recitative

recitative—Comfort ye my people—you are but little acquainted with this charming woman, you have not heard her sing—the divine subject swelled with the harmony of her voice and execution into real comfort ; we were inspired, and each took an instrument ; she led through the whole oratorio—and when I expressed a fear that the exercise of her heavenly voice might retard her recovery, she answered with energy, *No Sir*, it will rather accelerate it ; we took coffee there and returned to the house before sunset.

The next morning she favored us with her company at breakfast, and gracefully thanked us, me in particular, for the serene evening our solicitude to amuse her had afforded—It was a foretaste, added she, of the divine avocations, which will soon employ all my hours : yet, that room, that stream which passes the gothic—she stopped, and hesitated—Ah ! what less than the soul-moving notes of the immortal Handel, could have so effectually soothed the sad tumult which filled my poor breaking heart, as memory recurr'd to—again she stopped—but *he* who exalts the valley, and lays the mountain low, will not forsake my Edward ; oh Sir ! taking my hand, you are affected, you tremble, you fear for your friend ; join with me, dropping on her knees, and clasping her white hands with fervency, her face and neck crimsoned over, and her fine eyes cast upwards ; join with me to implore the God of mercy, to avert the dreadful blow we fear.

Lovely Agnes ! thy fervent prayers were vain, the Fiat was gone forth—the ill-fated youth was past recal.—

She arose, and glided from us like a vision.—

We

We then gave vent to our sorrows, and our fears; and the Major, as if struck by her mention of the river, passing by the gothic cell; recollected, that altho' the door, and window shutters next the grove were fast, the other front over the cascade might not be so; *my Caroline shuddered*—I will go, said he, this very afternoon, and search that place; I may at least discover some clue to lead to the poor wanderer.

Never let the wisdom of man, despise the power of instinct, the presentiment of evil.——

Did Major Melrose wish more earnestly to recover our friend, than myself? Was he more interested in his fate? more steady in his friendship? and more warm in his attachment? No my dear mother, truly might I say, my love for him surpassed the love of woman; yet I trembled at the apprehension of the discoveries which might be made, in the cell; I feared some hidden, some dreadful mystery, which I dared not to explore; and when the Major requested I would stay and attend the ladies, I felt as if a load had been removed from my mind; as if I had escaped some impending danger, as if, but I—I cannot describe it.

The Major, as Agnes had obligingly promised to favor us with her company at dinner, deferred going to the Hermitage 'till she retired, fearing his absence might alarm her.

My lines you see are crooked, but the tremor on my fingers, is infinitely short of that at my heart.

After dinner Agnes withdrew to her closet, but engaged to go to the summer-room in the evening, the Major then ordered his horse.

About six the cabriole, (she was too weak to walk

walk across the park) was brought to the door; she was in better spirits than I had yet seen her.

How good you all are, said she, as she returned the salute of the ladies, who were just before us; and pressing my hand as I assisted her into the cabriole, how good, and how happy are you Mr. Butler, in the possession of that amiable creature; when you no longer see Agnes Neville, rest assured her orisons will be offered to heaven for your continued felicity;—my Edward, my brother if he yet exists, must do—all the rest; *he* will thank you for your kindness to his *sister*—— My heart swelled to my eyes, an unbidden tear dropped on her delicate hand—she started—You have heard bad news—oh! tell me—tell me all, relieve me from this aching suspense, which whatever countenance I wear preys here, putting her hand to her heart—it was to no purpose I assured her I had not heard of Harley, she continued to implore me to tell her what had happened, with such terrific earnestness, that I was obliged to stop several times, as the motion of the carriage added to her agitations; and deprived her of the power to respire; the ladies saw she was ill, and joined us; but it was not till we had reached the summer-house, we could at all succeed in our endeavours to pacify her.

Don't we miss somebody, said she looking round, where is the Major?

I stammered, and again the weight of those dismal apprehensions of I knew not what, which had so recently affected *her*, almost suffocated *me*.

He has letters to write, said Madame Vallmont, with more presence of mind.

Agnes looked a meaning she did not give to words

words; tea and ice were served, and we began our little concert.

The river at this place, you know Madam, is wider than at any other part, the current which comes from the hill runs very rapid, 'till it divides just under the water-fall at the Hermitage, from thence it glides more gently, till it again joins in the great river T——.

The sun was now near setting, not a breath of air stir'd a leaf of the flowers which grow in profusion round the room; Agnes was in the recitative "Thy rebuke hath broken his heart," and her own as well as ours was flowing at her eyes; when Madame Vallmont arose, and going nearer the window; I beg pardon said she, but heavenly as your musick is, I must interrupt it; see Mr. Butler! there is something coming down with the stream, so very brilliant it dazzles my sight, I have seen it this half hour, and have been trying to make out, what it can possibly be.

Agnes immediately left the piano, we all crouded round the window, and as Madame Vallmont said could plainly discern something floating towards us in the river; on which the rays of the setting sun play'd with uncommon lustre.

Slow, too slow for our eager curiosity, it advanced; the servants had been dragging, and had drawn out the nets just above the park paling; we perceived their attention was attracted, by the same object with ours, and as they were nearer to it, could sooner distinguish what it was.

Presently we saw they were alarmed, some jumped into the river, others put out their hooks, and a couple ran towards the summer-room, to unchain the pleasure boat, which is fastened under the window.

In that instant, Major Melrose entered; with looks so wan, so full of terror, and despair; that like poor King Henry I found my loss, ere he his tongue; he threw himself pale, breathless, and trembling, on the ground; and spreading his hands over his face wept aloud.

I could no longer support Agnes, who was standing on a stool to have a greater command of the river; my arms slackened in their power, I fell back on a chair.

Caroline flew to me, Agnes stared with wild affright, without seeming to see any of us.

Madam Vallmont, who had still continued to gaze earnestly on the river, presently turned from the window; and altho' her countenance was equally expressive of terror, and grief, she endeavoured to conceal her agitation, and taking a hand of each of the ladies, entreated them to return with her to the house.

Caroline, who tho' terrified at the situation in which she saw us, had no distinct idea of the cause; hung round me, beg'd to share my anxiety, and would not be persuaded to leave me; Madame Vallmont then exerted all her influence to prevail on Agnes to accompany her, but the dear creature was still immoveable as marble.

The Major, who was actually unable to speak, 'till relieved by a copious shower of tears, which seemed to ease his manly heart; then gave utterance to his grief.

Dear ill-fated youth! generous, unfortunate creature! Oh what hast thou done! rash boy, thou hast torn from my soul the prop on which I thought to have rested! hadst thou died in the bed of honor, hadst thou fallen the victim of sickness, but such cool premeditated *self* murder!

Oh

Oh my dear Harley! how little did I foresee when thy life was bravely ventured to save mine, thou wouldst have chosen a watry bed to die in thyself.

As if awakened from death, Agnes started, it must be so, cried she, darting out of the room.

My Caroline sunk with the Major's last words into my arms, to all appearance dead; how I got her to the house I know not, her danger engaged all my attention, 'till *she* was restored to life, I thought not of the catastrophe I had so much feared.

As soon as my dearest wife recovered her reason, she asked after poor Agnes; and our surprise was mutual at finding neither her, the Major, nor Madame Vallmont were returned to the house; at her earnest request I then hastened back to the summer-room, which I found quite deserted.

I then, guided by the sound of Madame Vallmont's voice went round to the grass plot by the park palings; where I beheld the poor desolate dying Agnes; her hair torn, and dishevelled, hanging in loose ringlets; her head cloaths and neck covering, lying in tatters on the ground; her beautiful arms bare, and all the symptoms of wild distraction glaring round the lovely ruin.

She was just then changing from a fit of raving, to melancholy madness; and was sitting on the ground by the dead body of our lost Edward; his head swollen, and disfigured, was on her lap; with one hand she held a smelling bottle to his nose; the other with her eyes were lifted to heaven in a supplicating attitude; Madame Vallmont in agony was beseeching her to go with her, and endeavouring to cover her head, and neck, which

however she would not suffer her to do; and to complete the sad group, the Major stood at the feet of the corpse, his arms folded, his eyes fix'd, and no sign of sense; except the most bitter groans.

Why Madam? said I to Mrs. Vallmont, why do you permit her to continue in sight of such an object? Oh my poor Edward! and I could not help kneeling on the other side of the body.

You remember madam he ran from us in his bridal cloaths; the unwelcome errand on which you came to Belle-Vue, possibly engrossed your attention, so much, you did not observe his dress, it was embroidered in the first taste, with foil and spangles; I bespoke it at his desire in London; Nothing said the unhappy youth, can be too elegant for my Agnes, and since I am in grace with her, "I will maintain it at some little cost."

In this fatal dress he plunged from the precipice of his cell into the river; where we suppose he must have lain under water and again floated at the only time when it was possible he could be seen by his unhappy sister; as we find, she intended leaving us the next morning, her departure for the convent of Madame St. Lawrens was fixed, and the time she had passed in her apartment had been devoted to the final arrangement of her affairs.

Madame Vallmont rather hurt at my manner asked me, how I would have her act; Do you suppose Sir said she, I want either spirit or inclination to enforce any measure that would tend to the restoration of my beloved friend? no Sir! yet I cannot tear her from that affecting object, nor had I strength equal to such an act, would I, my heart would not let me do it.

I had

I had now taken his lifeless hand, and could no longer restrain my tears, dear Harley! friend! brother! I called him. Agnes heard me, What, cried she, are there more brothers lost? hush, be silent, breathe not, stir not, wake not my beloved, my own Edward, my — Oh no! no! pardon, pardon, 'twas but for a moment—Alas Sir! rising on her knees, and gently laying his head on the grass, then crossing her bare arms on her heaving bosom, and looking with mournful wildness in my face; Alas Sir! it was involuntary, we were ignorant of the sin, you see, pointing to the body, *he* is innocent, and the Lady Abbess will receive her poor Agnes.

Mrs. Vallmont in hopes to prevail on her to leave the body, begged she would immediately set out; I am ready my dear Agnes to accompany you to Paris said the good woman, offering to assist her to rise.

No, no, no, no, repeated she with quickness, shaking her head, her hair flying about, it is all over, we will not part, in heaven there are no marriages; oh! casting her eyes tenderly on the corpse, what heart so hard to injure thee; cruel! barbarous! we had mothers once, and they are angels; but we have no father, no mother now; we will lay on the cold ground—together; ah poor, poor Edward! why didst thou leave me? I looked, and looked for thee 'till my head ached and my heart was bursting—he took me Sir, again addressing me, out of the fire, and his poor hands were burnt, and his face was scorched, you know best—to be sure, but I would ask one simple question—you gave me absolution, you told me I might love him without sin, yet here you see he lies, and the wind blows on his poor

head, and he is wet, and cold, but I, I will cover him, I will hide him here in my heart; and oh my dear mother! the raving fit returned, the sweet creature actually tore her cloaths off; the housekeeper, her own maid, Mrs. Vallmont's and other female servants, were now melancholy and affrighted spectators of a scene, that struck every beholder with anguish.

I bid them force her from the body, but their utmost strength was unequal to the task; she clasped her arms round it, called on her Edward, her brother to save, to protect her; I was obliged myself to unclasp her hand by force, and carry her in my arms; still she grasped at the body; and once so twisted her hands in his hair, that in the violent struggle, two large locks were torn from his head.

As soon as I had taken her in my arms, the body was removed; when she saw the men touch it, her shrieks which pierced my ears as we crossed the park were the most dismal that ever sorrow wrung from distraction; and continued without intermission, 'till Doctor Greville took some blood from her, and forced a medicine down her throat, which from her violent struggles he had great difficulty to do.

During the operation she called in the most pathetic terms, on Edward, on her mother, Dear St. Clare hear the cries of your Agnes, carry me to Madame St. Lawrens, deep, deep bury me deep, take me from the sons of violence; oh filicide! filicide! what hast thou done? the mothers were thy victims, must the children also bleed? oh spare us! spare us!

Her shrieks still found in my ears, the Doctor's humanity,

humanity was as conspicuous as his skill, he was sensibly affected.

The medicine was intended to compose her mind, I doubt it has benumbed her faculties, without having that effect; she now lies quiet indeed, and her eyes are closed, but such sighs break from her, as would melt the most insensible.

If on her recovery from her present stupor, for indeed it is not rest; she should ask any questions, the Doctor who continues with her will answer according to the state she is in; her apartment is darkened, and no breath heard but her own deep sighs; soon, soon I fear it will be more silent; it is I think impossible, considering her late illness, and subsequent weakness, she should ever more be restored to health.

As to Edward, his end has fatally justified all my apprehensions; I ever dreaded his extreme sensibility, and it woefully confirms the maxim I so ineffectually enforced with all my might to *him*, that *the greatest danger to young minds is keeping them unemployed*; the time which in youth is not well filled, will in the end prove to be the source of evils innumerable.

We have removed the body into the house, where a shocking ceremony must be gone through.

The Major found the front of the cell fastened up, but on examination perceived that the door on the other side was open; he then went round, and up the dismal steps.

The moment he entered, he saw the hat with the white favor which the wretched bridegroom had worn, lying on the ground; on the table were two papers, one sealed and without directions, the other, six lines intended for a will; we

have not had courage yet to open the sealed paper, nor have we indeed mentioned having found either; as we fear the coroner will be scrupulous in his verdict: his death now bears some appearance of accident, and you will not doubt but we wish to have it so considered.

My heart, my good, my honored mother, labours under the keenest impressions of sorrow, yet am I, tho' so ill qualified, obliged to assume the office of comforter.

My poor Caroline's grievous situation, could only give me strength of mind; she has successive faintings every half hour, she is indeed dreadfully affected; yet I dare not expect you here, this fatal event, and that which will, I am firmly of opinion follow it; will render your presence necessary at Bath.

The Major is extremely indisposed, he keeps to his apartment, *that* indeed we all do; his is a generous, brave, yet tender heart—I just looked in on him this morning, his hat was flapt, a silk handkerchief was loosely tied round his neck, he was walking up and down his room, and seemed afraid to trust his voice in making any enquiries; to mine, after *his* health, he could only answer, Never, never worse; and turning from me—She is alive I think they say, it is more than I expected.

His valet informs me he has not been in bed the night—and thus miserable are all the inmates of Belle-Vue.

It is not for me, Madam, to dictate to you, you are certainly the best judge how to break this dismal matter to the General; my Caroline is at present too ill to be removed, nor would she, if
she

she were not, leave the unhappy Agnes ; yet I fervently hope, the General will so arrange us, that we may soon and for ever leave this place ; God protect the best of mothers prays her dutiful and affectionate

J. BUTLER.

L E T T E R XXIX.

Mr. Butler in continuation.

Belle-Vue.

I proceed Madam, to inform you, that the coroner's verdict being in favor of the last respect we could pay to the memory of my friend, we are just returned from his interment—— to *whom* as he said, did *he* belong? yet never was a man more sincerely lamented.

To avoid the croud we had every reason to expect would assemble on the sad occasion, we appointed the midnight hour for the solemn act, of consigning his loved remains to his original dust.

But the veneration and respect of some, and the gratitude and affection of others, of his neighbours, were too vigilant to be eluded; *they* were no less assiduous in their enquiries, than *we* in our precautions.

We had forbid the bells tolling, the melancholy circumstances attending his death, were of a nature that required concealment; and a private funeral was what decency demanded from us, who knew, with all his former virtue, beneficence and goodness of heart; he had at last, acted a part unworthy of a man, and a christian; but as our reasons were not known, and as few people suspected, and fewer really knew, the
manner

manner of his leaving the world, there were many who took great offence at the hour, and privacy of his interment.

At the foot of the hill which leads to his village, we were met by a large body of people; most of them carrying torches; whose sighs, and groans, were the only oral proof of their number; ten boys, and ten girls, to whom he annually allowed warm cloathing, and for whose schooling he paid for chaunting in the church, immediately began an anthem, the rest respectfully opened a way for the hearse, and coach, and then fell into a procession behind.

The moon, Madam, faintly shone, we saw her transient beams through the trees as we passed, the *now* deserted hermitage—the white obelisk, which the lamented Edward consecrated to friendship, struck us with sorrow, and regret; the wind chair from whence he took views of the fine vale of Belle-Vue, now never more to be occupied, looked I thought like a gaping sepulchre; and the timber, and bricks, which lay in confused heaps round the house, they were intended to decorate; gave it already the appearance of that ruin, in which it will soon lie; the whole time we were passing the wall, our own feelings were too acute for utterance, but the sobs, and whispering lamentations of the men, women, and children who followed the hearse, were too general, not to be heard.

When the corpse was taken out of the hearse, six young men clad in decent mourning, insisted, tho' in the most respectful whispers, on carrying it, the undertakers men with some reluctance therefore resigned their office; and we proceeded to the body of the church, which was so filled
with

with decent people, that when our procession came in, it was extremely crowded, a great number eagerly pressed round the coffin, some to touch, others to see what contained the last remains of him, they called the good young squire.

I directed the pall to be removed, and they who could read, sobbed over the simple inscription,

Edward Harley, obit 23d of August,

Etat. 23.

Alas how dear !

I could not help particularly remarking a very decent white headed old man, whose spectacles were often put on to read the inscription, but as often taken off to be wiped ; and he was after numberless efforts, obliged to relinquish the attempt, and retired audibly sobbing among the croud ; this was old Lucas of the mill.

When their affectionate curiosity was gratified, the service was concluded ; and the Major, myself, and Mr. Montford, hastened from the sacred spot, where now rests the mortal part of our beloved Edward ; but the vault was no sooner closed, than the grief which respect had kept silent among the people, broke out into the most clamorous wailings.

The friend of the poor, of mankind was no more.

He never strained on a tenant in all his days, said a rough looking farmer, I shall never have so good a landlord.

My own son, cried a decent elderly woman, was not dearer to me.

How respectful was he to the aged, said an old veteran, who is an officer on half pay.

And how good to the sick, joined a pallid looking husbandman.

How

How charitable to the poor was echoed by them all.

And said a pretty damsel modestly advancing, her face covered with tears, how tender hearted to poor maidens, these were the gloves he gave me at Patty Lucas's burial, I little thought I should wear them at his own.

This simple remembrance renewed the sighs, and groans of the whole assembly; *one* remembered when he was last seen in the village, *another* had particularly remarked how blooming Madam Agnes, and the good squire looked, when they went to pay master Thrifty his rent, for farmer Clod's sick widow.

This brought another mourner to our particular notice, it was the widow herself; a thin sickly woman, with a fine infant in her arms, and three others hanging to her gown and apron.

Yes said she, he preserved a home for the widow, and he fed her fatherless children! he was too good for this world, my dear Johnny is now with him, and *may be* who knows but I may see them both in a better place.

Another repeated his very words, and as if by consent they again all crowded towards the vault, the rector at their head; insomuch that we pressed with difficulty through them, and returned home so unfit for conversation, that we parted without breaking silence.

Agnes continues totally deprived of her reason, her raving returned yesterday morning; and how shall I say it? her fine form and lovely arms, were obliged to be confined by a strait waistcoat, which gave her infinite pain, she struggled and remonstrated but it was absolutely necessary; after bruising her delicate limbs with her
vain

vain endeavours to loosen the straps, she lay sometime without moving.

In that interval the Major went to her bed side, merely as he said to look at her before he went to the funeral: she had not yet known any body, but his mourning struck her; she gazed earnestly at him.

You are dressed then, said she, in a faint low voice, but *that, that* is the mockery of woe; where is Edward? is he dressed too? let me ask you Major, what have you done with him? he would not have served *you* so—you know he plunged into the water to save *you*—but nobody will assist him, but *me*, and they have bound *me*, see, see, there! he sinks, he is lost; help! help! —Oh Edward! my dear brother! they hold me, they will not let me come to thee,

The gleam of hope, which the recollection of the Major raised, then vanished; she continued dismally raving, and shrieking, 'till we were out of hearing; when she was forced to swallow another potent draught, which as usual threw her into a stupor, that prevented her exhausting herself by raving, without rendering her insensible to sorrow.

I inclose Edward's posthumous letter, which you will please to return—we have none of us fortitude enough to copy it.

Mr. Montford pressed us to go with him to his seat—but Caroline is still very ill—and I despair of her amendment here. Adieu dear madam.

J. BUTLER

LETTER

L E T T E R XXX.

Harley's posthumous Letter to Mr. Butler.

I HAVE escaped, Butler—I tore myself from her arms—I burst in anguish—I die in despair.

Once I could shed tears—now my brain burns to madness, and the soothing stillicide of utterable grief no longer washes my haggard cheeks.

This *was* the cell of contemplation——It is *now* the cavern of despair.

Hither the son of sorrow brings his load of anguish——and here will he forever lay it down.

Thou Butler, wouldst bid me live—and with all the sophistry of art, and reason, prove that the proper and rational exercise of a manly mind is to combat misfortune, and resign itself to fate——But *I* have *that* within *me* surpasseth all that heart ever conceived, all that tongue ever uttered——
— — — Hark——What is she, whose voice in pleasing terror still vibrates on my ear?
— whose form filling the space of the whole creation hangs like a transparent curtain before my eyes!——It is my *wife*——my *sister*——

* * * * *

Oh God! thou 'only witness of my last agonies—thou seest the struggles of my soul—thou knowest how inadequate is the strength of thy poor creature, to the task thy justice inflicts on the unhappy son of a perjured father.

The

The incestuous fever still burns in my veins—
still throbs at my heart—Oh pardon—pardon—I
reign the life thou hast been pleased to load with
vult—

I could brave misfortune—I could endure cala-
mity—but I cannot live the victim of so horri-
ble a passion.

Shall the despairing lover of his *own sister*,
dare to appear in the presence of the pure of heart ?
——*Never ! never !*——Am I not the offspring
of infamy -- heir only to the weak folly of my frail
mother, to the wicked arts of my father ? and
should not such a race be exterminated ?——
What vacuum shall I leave in the world ? —what
trace of my existence ? —to whom do I belong ?

Life instead of ending, will aggravate my of-
fences—even now, I hear her soft voice dying
on the summer breeze—her image floats before
my eyes.

The tumult in my senses, is a summons to
death ; then only, when the vital blood has
ceased to flow, shall I cease to adore her.

Unhappy mother ! ——oh ! that the hand of
charity had not arrested thy early fate, that thou
and thy guilty burthen had perished, e'er he had
cause to curse in the frenzy of despair, the being
thou gavest him.

Insult not thou hateful light the dark anguish
of my soul, with thy piercing rays—what have I
to do with thee ? ——I see without thy officious
aid, the black abyss before me,—the impassible
gulph that will soon separate me from my *friend*
——my *sister*——from *Agnes*——it is terrible, it appals
my senses ; but still more terrible—still more am
I appall'd at that which now environs me—I
strain my aching sight——I look round—no one
way

way is left to escape—to fly from myself—no mortal power can help the self-devoted—the poison is rooted in my nature—it is a part of me—

Sister! Agnes! Angel! oh why! why so late! Father of the creation wilt thou not be merciful——

Under the foam of the rushing torrent—at the foot of the precipice, let my beating brain have rest ——

Let my sorrows sink for ever—let them be hid beneath the surface of the passing stream.

It was the fate one parent consigned me to, e'er yet I bore the hateful likeness of the other.

I complete my destiny—

This was the place from whence the soul of Agnes recoiled, when first her angel form irradiated my dwelling—here—when my love had received the sanction of her friends, and the assent of the purest of female hearts, how often have I led her “nothing loth” and while on my knees I breathed my ardent vows; the falling cascade, the dashing of the waters against the rock under our feet, and the impervious shade, all conspired to bind in solemn compact, that union which nature abhorred to witness—oh Agnes! those vows must be no more remembered—hast thou forgotten them? are they all expunged from thy memory? canst thou not select one? not one? a brother might offer in pure fraternal love, to a virtuous, a beloved sister? oh no! no! my only asylum from the fascinating guilt, is *death*.

Butler farewell—adieu my Caroline—*here* we meet no more—and oh, thou—whom I dare not name—wilt thou not sometimes think—sometimes drop a tear over the fate of thy departed Edward?——if there has been an action of my life,

life, on which thy uncontaminated mind dares to dwell, without the anguish of that self reproach under which I die; let it be ever present to thy memory, cherish it for the sake of him to whom thou wert dearer than life, but do not lament the act that restores thee to the blessings of society—my existence would have impeded thy happiness—and (for do I not know thy heart, thy gentle—thy sympathizing heart) my sufferings would have been the bane of thy peace—thou wilt now rise superior to the storm in which I perish; a few short moments, and I am no more—I dare not pray for you. Self convinced of the sinfulness of the deed I am on the point of committing, I dare not ask of God, ought but mercy to the immortal part of,

The lost

EDWARD.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXI.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to J. Butler, Esq.

Bath.

My dearest Son,

I Send this express, and shall follow it with Mr. and Mrs. Moncrafts to-morrow.

To say your young friend is lamented here is poorly to express our sorrow and regret at his premature departure; but as every poison is said to contain its own antidote, so every affliction to which in this life we are subject, when viewed with the calm eye of patient resignation, has a bright side. In all the calamities with which it has pleased heaven to visit me; and you know my dear James they were many; I have been enabled to preserve my fortitude, by the certainty that in the end, the events I most deplored, would turn to matter of consolation, and that I should bend in future thankfulness for present evil.

Considering the man, his peculiar turn of mind, and more peculiar situation; the impressions he early received from that romantic, tho' worthy woman, Mrs. Montford, and the refined sensibility, so dangerous to him, but delightful to her, which she took such uncommon pains to cultivate; and considering also his unfortunate attachment to Miss Neville, and the critical de-
velopement

velopement of the fatal secret of their consanguinity ; the rash step which so sinfully ended his mortal existence, was not more to be dreaded, than expected.

The General and Lady Mary are drowned in tears, yet are more grieved than surprised ; but the situation of his niece affects her uncle too much, the gout returned to his stomach soon after your letter arrived.

Lord Ruthven is also very ill ; his pride ill-brooks the disgrace the wicked Neville entailed on his family ; and the impossibility of *now* avenging the injury done Lady Mary, increases in no small degree the weakness natural to his age and infirmity.

Lady Mary is far from well, but her apprehensions for the lives of two persons so dear to her, while they occupy her mind, give her strength, and spirits, to assist in the care of them. She deplores the poor maniac, and feels the utmost concern for your Caroline ; she insists on my coming to you, and Mrs. Moncreafs, whose love for Agnes is truly sisterly, begs to accompany me, her husband escorts us.

My impatience to join your endeavours for the restoration of your amiable wife, equals my desire to oblige Lady Mary, who thinks the General will be pleased at my being with Agnes.

Doctor C—— from hence, and Doctor M—— from London, are engaged to go immediately to Belle-Vue, the former travels with us.

Poor Harley, my tears will flow at the recollection of his many amiable qualities, but I console myself my dear son in the reflection, that had he lived he could never have regained his peace of mind ; he was certainly guiltless in
his

his passion for his sister, but there is something so distressing in the retrospect of such a connection, it would have always preyed on him; his sentiments were too refined, his ideas too delicate, to be engaged in, or amused by the common avocations which Pliny justly calls, "The solemn impertinences of life:" and tho' as the same author observes, "that sort of death which we cannot impute to the hand of providence, is of all others the most to be lamented," and tho' we who are blessed with the enlightened doctrine of christianity, believe the sin of suicide; to be the most desperate, and unpardonable against the trinity; yet the mourners for poor Harley, are certain he would not have thus abandoned his friends, and blasted their hopes, of his regaining his peace of mind, if in truth they were not desperate: for my own part, I am convinced, neither the precepts of philosophy, nor the commerce of the world, would have ever restored the unhappy youth to himself; while therefore I lament as a christian, the manner of his death, I cannot help considering it, as the end of his temporal sorrow; and with respect to eternity, oh God how unmeasurable are thy mercies!

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXII.

*Mrs. Butler to Lady Mary Moncreafs.**Belle-Vue.*

I Write, as your Ladyship commanded, the instant of my arrival, and would to God I could fend you either hope or comfort, the former would be deceiving you, and the latter is not to be found in this dwelling.

I regret bringing Mrs. Moncreafs, I cannot prevail on her to leave the dark chamber, where the miserable maniac is—she conceits that she recollects her, and will not suffer the medicines to be administered, by any but herself; which however nothing but fear would induce Agnes to swallow.

Sweet creature! her arms are very much swelled, and mark'd with the straps of the strait waistcoat; Julia insisted on having it taken off, she is sure her poor sister will be patient with *her*; finding she had continued three hours quiet, the doctors were consulted on the propriety of getting her up; they feared a raving fit, but as your daughter would not cease her importunities they at length consented. Agnes suffered them to do what they pleased with her, not exhibiting the least sign either of satisfaction, or the reverse; nature my dear friend is not quite exhausted, but her reason is totally gone.

* * * * *

I was

I was extremely shocked on entering the dismal apartment just now.

Mrs. Moncrafts was on her knees, rubbing her arms, which were swelled, and bathing them with her tears; Agnes was in the attitude of stooping to her, and whispering, but so low, that it was impossible to distinguish her words; when she saw me, tho' the room was so dark, she could not distinguish had she been sensible, who I was; she was alarmed, and stop'd; as I approached, her agitation seemed to increase, and taking something out of her bosom, she gave it in a hurry to Julia, then opening her wrapper, she said she in a low weak voice, I have it not — do not! do not! faintly attempting to scream; let me go to Madame St. Lawrens, St. Clare *will weep*, looking at her *swelled arms*, then leaning back in her chair, and closing her eyes, she whispered inwardly.

I could not bear to stay any longer in the room, and entreated Mrs. Moncrafts to accompany me to a more chearful apartment; but as I said she will not be prevailed on to leave her: what she was so anxious to conceal from me, was some hair she had torn from poor Harley's head when she was forced from his body; and though so entirely lost to recollection, in other respects, she remembered to reclaim the deposit, as soon as I was gone; this trifling incident convinces Julia she is a favourite, and the good creature will not stir from her chamber.

My daughter is still very ill, and weak, and my son too much affected himself to console her; I have consented to their departure, as the melancholy scene will be renewed as long as they remain here; Mr. Montford, who now fears he shall

shall lose Caroline, entreats them to go to him, and left his coach for their conveyance; Mrs. Benson, a worthy matronly woman, who was housekeeper to Mrs Montford, and since to Harley, attends her young lady, as she always call'd Mrs. Butler; they leave us to-morrow.

Major Melrose is become a perfect misanthrope, he neither eats nor drinks with us, nor stirs out of his own room, except to that of Agnes; and morning, and evening to the spot, where Harley's body was laid, when first taken out of the river; I told him of the General's situation, and of your distress; all bad madam, answered he, very bad, but I will go to them as soon as this poor girl is released, she will soon be the happiest among us, she will soon be with the dear boy.

My son had not resolution to go to the Hermitage; his man went to affix his seals to the different locks, 'tis a dismal place, he says, the grass is already grown over the walks, and the beautiful woods are entirely deserted; we cannot prevail on any of the servants to inhabit the house, it is a received notion among the common people, that the squire walks:

My spirits are so depressed that I can say little to you on such a combination of distressful circumstances; only request you to call to mind how many blessings are yet in your possession, your Moncrafts is the very Moncrafts you have so long loved, without deviating from the honor, and constancy of his character; you must sooth, and comfort him, you must prepare him for the worst; and you must yourself remember, we are commanded "*not to mourn like those who have no hope.*"

Agnes

Agnes the instant she is released from this world, will join the seraphic choir in the heaven of heavens.

If spirits are allowed to recognize each other in a future state, as I firmly *hope*, and *believe* they are, the bosom of the fainted mother will receive the blameless spirit of her beatified child; in this faith I feel a kind of holy reverence, every time I enter the chamber, I see it is true her emaciated form, lovely even in death, I hear her groans, and witness the restless wanderings of her mind; but I cannot help thinking that even *now*, the spirit of St. Clare is permitted to hover over her daughter.

Doctor C—— writes to the General, he approves of all that has been done by Doctor Grenville; but coincides in his opinion, that the sweet saint is dying——poor Madame Vallmont—but we are all mourners.

C. BUTLER.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.**Belle-Vue.**Midnight.*

I Am excessively fatigued, the faculties of my mind, as well as body seem utterly exhausted; a tasteless insipidity, and weariness pervades my whole system; yet I have no inclination to retire to rest.

The Doctors are apprehensive this night may prove decisive, they think before the last change takes place, it is probable, Agnes may have an interval of reason: cold sweats, and inward convulsions have for the last two hours seized her, I have really expected her dissolution every moment; she is however now rather better.

Julia will not believe she is near her end, she flatters herself there is yet hope.

Morning.

Mrs. Moncrafts is laid down, I take my pen by the bed-side of Agnes; no need now of the strait waistcoat; Doctor M—— arrived at five in the morning—they have cut off her fine hair, and laid a blister on her head—she made not the least resistance, but rather seemed pleased; she thought she was taking her vows; the cutting off the hair you know is a ceremony always observed

ved by nuns at their profession ; she would kneel, and we supported her ; oh ! how solemn was her look, she prayed in French with such fervour that she seemed lifted above mortality, but was so weak she fainted before the operation was finished.

When it was over, we laid her on the bed, the cold sweats returned and her convulsions were stronger than the last night ; but both these mortal symptoms are gone off, and she seems to rest for the first time since she lost her reason.

Evening.

They hope much from the blister, that it may prolong her life, I will not doubt ; but as to her recovery, I believe that impossible.

Midnight.

She is still composed, I am retiring to rest.

Morning.

I was awoke at six, by Julia, who informed me that Agnes was perfectly sensible ; that Father Dominick had been called at her desire, and was now in her chamber with Madame De Vallmont, shut up at their devotions ; and added she with a smile of hope, Agnes speaks quite strong —I persuaded her to repose on my bed, and promised to watch in her place.

* * * * *

The good priest has just left me, he has, he told me, administered the sacrament to Agnes, she was quite composed and spoke of Harley's death with a serene resignation. She enquired with some degree of solicitude where he was buried,

ried, and on being told, said softly, it cannot be, she spoke of her approaching dissolution, and directed him to take into his possession, some deeds out of her cabinet, (of which she gave him the key) and after her death delivered them with her thankful, and dutiful commendation to the General; she requested her body might be sent to Madame St. Lawrens, for interment—Madame Vallmont had some conversation with her, he *believes* respecting the embalment, he extolled her piety, and natural goodness of heart, he lamented the miserable end of Harley, and left *me* in tears for the early fate of the dying Agnes.

I then went to her apartment, the curtains were thrown open, and Madame Vallmont sat at the head of the bed supporting her young friend. Although she had before seen me for so short a time, she immediately recollected me; and after looking earnestly in my face, closed her eyes, and tears which she had not shed since the fatal evening, forced their way through her silken eyelashes; she articulated several words but we could only distinguish—*fatal messenger*—Judging by this, that the sight of me renewed the memory of the dreadful past, I retreated out of her sight, but did not leave the room.

Mrs. Moncras could not long compose herself to rest, she very soon returned to Agnes.

Oh my beloved Julia, cried Agnes, how long have you been with me? when did you come?—Come to close the dying eyes of your poor friend.

Not so, my Agnes, replied Julia, not my dear friend to close your eyes, but to assist in restoring you to health, to your friends; your noble uncle is breaking his heart about you.

I hope

I hope not, rejoined Agnes, he feels I do not doubt my calamity,—but a little time will reconcile him to the only event which could restore my peace, and reunite me to God——Oh Julia my sweet sister, what a heart must mine have been to have seen what I have seen, and lived ;—I go at an early period of life, my years it is true are few, but my afflictions, oh Julia ! how heavy have they been, yet blessed be the holy Jesus, I have no unrepented sin to impede my flight to the mansion of peace ; I shall be restored to my dear mother ! I shall be among the chosen of heaven ! and see my Redeemer face to face ! and what is the happiness of the most happy *here*, compared to that ? I wished indeed to die with Madame St. Lawrens, but my soul will reach the throne of mercy as soon from hence, and let, I implore you, my body be carried to her convent ; let my dust be mixed with the holy earth of the pious sisterhood. Weep not Julia, rather pray for my release ; you know not, putting her hand to her heart, what I have suffered *here* ; do you not tremble to think, that had my life been now lengthened, the fate of that dear unhappy brother might have been contagious ?—oh Julia, poor ! poor Edward ! he was *your* brother, as well as *mine*—and he was all that was virtuous, tender, and good ;—but he is gone—he died for me, and (weeping) he was wet, and cold,—but do not discover it, I hid him here, here in my heart's core ; she was now wandering again, and poor Julia sunk on her knees by the side of the bed in tears ; I sent for the Doctors who were displeased, we had suffered her to talk so much.

She would rise, where was her new muslin ?

she would be dressed, and walk out ; she had promised to meet some body, no matter who.

The Doctors mildly persuaded her, but in vain—they feared a violent paroxysm would be fatal, she was therefore indulged.

Madame Vallmont presented her wrapper, she refused it with indignation.

Was not she going out ? did not every body dress ? she would have her white lutestring, and new muslin ; this was her bridal dress, and at last to gratify her it was brought ; she ordered her maid to put it on, and tho' so faint as hardly to be heard, she was not to be put out of this whim ; it was just thrown round her, she then attempted to walk, but sunk suddenly into Madame Vallmont's arms, whom we assisted to place her in an easy chair, and then at the doctor's request left the room.

Noon.

She is now in a sweet slumber, yet speaks inwardly, St. Clare, Victoire, Edward frequently pass her lips ; this sleep must be refreshing, as it is the first natural rest she has had.

Three o' Clock.

My son and daughter are just gone, Caroline fainted as they were lifting her into the coach. I have again looked in on Agnes, she is still asleep, she breathes much easier, and no longer talks. Julia and I are both indisposed, we are going to walk in the air ; the dark close room affects my head—Madame Vallmont worn out with fatigue is laid down on Agnes's bed, whose nurse and maid watch in her stead.

* * * * *

Great

Great God, what a scene ! all is over Lady Mary ! Agnes is no more !

Sweet saint ! thy face has recovered its tranquil beauty, madness and misery are vanquished ! I am too much affected to give you particulars, Major Melrose will take the pen.

C. BUTLER.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

*Major Melrose to Lady Mary Menclraft.**Madam,**Belle-Vue.*

I write, I *oblige* myself to write to you, because it is necessary you should know our present situation, and because you shall have time to digest the proper method of breaking to the General, the death of his niece ; if indeed we ought to call that death, which in such a creature, is rather to be looked on as a period to mortality, than the end of life : and I am so selfish as to wish, the first agonies of grief may subside before I join you.

Mrs. Butler informed you of the tranquil state in which she left the angelic Agnes ; I afterwards saw her myself.

They had placed a pillow between her head and easy chair, at the back of which the nurse when I left her stood.

Madame Vallmont wearied with continual watching was dropt asleep.

Miss Neville's maid, a poor young thing she had taken under her protection out of charity ; tired undoubtedly of her confinement in a dark room, asked me if I thought she might venture to go down into the servant's hall to dinner ; to which as the nurse was present, and Agnes so easy I assented.

The

The countenance of the divine creature was then perfectly placid; her arms, which still bear the marks of the strait waistcoat, hung, one over the elbow of the chair, the other rested on a small table, on which stood the volatiles they had often occasion to use in the apartment—she was wrapped in a fine muslin dress, her head loaded with linen on the top, on account of the blister; so that her forehead down to her eyebrows were covered; but there was enough of her face seen to display inconceivable beauty.

I contemplated the lovely wreck a few minutes, and then took my daily walk to the spot of earth, on which the body of my preserver was laid, when it was taken out of the water.

And here let me avow, I loved, and I lament Edward Harley, as a fond father would his only hope. I am a batchelor of fortune, I was ill treated by the only relations I have, before I became independant of the world; my property was earned in the field of honor, under the torrid zone—my riches are Asiatic, but they are not the price of my integrity—consanguinity is the last thing I shall think of in the disposal of my estates—the brave fellow preserved my life, at the risk of his own; the longer I knew him, the dearer he was to me; but he is gone—he is out of the reach of *my gratitude*—nevertheless there is not a being he valued, a place he approved, or an incident that will bring him to my memory, but what I will cherish.

The grass plot therefore, where his body lay, attracts *me*, I visit it twice, sometimes more, every day; and if Belle-Vue was mine, I would there erect a cenotaph that should proclaim to all who saw it, the love Jack Melrose bore to Edward Harley.

But—poor fellow ! he is as I said gone—his honest soul, and humane disposition, could not parry the shafts of his adverse fortune ; they entered and rankled in his only vulnerable part ; he found his wounds were incurable, and therefore voluntarily resigned his life.

This now among the ancients would be recorded as a virtue—with us moderns it is a heinous sin—well be it so, his death we trust has expiated ; it is plain I, at least, do not think his is a condemned spirit ; for I am never so easy, as when I fancy I am, where it may possibly hover—accordingly, I take a pleasure, unknown to minds, whose attachments are bounded by the poor, shallow confines of mortality, in marking the very grass his poor body pressed—there, as I said before, if the place was mine, his monument should reach the skies ; and there I was, in a reverie the most acceptable to me, when I heard a confused sound of womens voices approaching me.

I had scarce lifted up my eyes, when I beheld a female figure dart across the lawn, leap the Ha Ha with the speed of an arrow, and ran towards me, which had the exact appearance of what we are told of a spectre. It was Agnes ! her loose flowing white dress and ghastly woe-worn looks, the celerity with which she advanced to the place where I stood, and my late reflection, all contributed to unman me ; I trembled, and had but just presence of mind to receive her in my arms.

So inattentive was the poor thing to every object, but that on which her disordered imagination was fixed, she neither saw, nor regarded me ; but weak, exhausted, and out of breath ;

she

she sunk involuntary on my bosom ; her eyes hollow, and dreadfully dim, seemed starting from their orbits, her head with a convulsive motion, was turned from side, to side, as if in search of something, which not perceiving, she meekly crossed her arms on her breast, and lifting her eyes upward, with a look so mournful, yet so resigned, that it will be ever present to my memory ; she fetched a deep sigh, her sweet face like an over-charged lilly dropped on my breast, and with another deeper sigh she expired.

* * * * *

I had no idea she was dead, the faintings she had been subject to, were often attended with symptoms as alarming as those which now appeared ; I therefore hastened towards the house with my lifeless burthen, and was soon met by Mrs. Butler, and your daughter, whom she had passed with incredible swiftness, followed by a posse of the domestics, who alarmed by the cries of the *nurse*, were coming in pursuit of her ; *she* also had the misfortune to slumber when left with Agnes, and although she was awakened by the rustling of her cloaths as the dear maniac ran or rather flew out of the apartment, yet it was impossible either to stop, or overtake her.

Ah sir ! cried Mrs. Butler, as soon as she looked on her face, she is gone ! she will never more revive !

Mrs. Moncrafts would not be of her opinion, she kissed her cold lips, her Agnes she was sure would yet recover.

Doctor M——had walked out, and doctor C——was gone to view the Hermitage ; I went immediately in pursuit of the former, leaving the

the women all employed in vain application of the volatile, &c. and had the good fortune to meet him on the terrace—on our return the countenances of all present, announced their despair ; a vein was breathed, that is, it was cut, merely to satisfy your Julia, and Madame Vallmont. We were then retiring ; but fainting and hysterics among the ladies, and the truly pitiable situation of the little waiting girl, who from the moment she heard of her mistress's running out, blamed herself for the consequence ; rendered the doctor's assistance necessary.

As to me madam, I am not of importance to anybody, and were it not, that my soul on principle condemns the act ; I should I believe, soon join the departed pair.

It was among the last requests of the deceased that her mortal remains should be deposited in the church of Madame St. Lawrens's convent : your Julia is very urgent to accompany her there !

What, cries she, raising her tearful eye to mine, shall Agnes ! my friend ! my sister ! be sent out of the kingdom, without *one* weeping follower, whose blood, as well as love she shared ? dear Major let me see her corpse received by Madame St. Lawrens ; it will be a relief to my heart, as long as I have the power of recollection.

Mr. Moncrafts did not indeed speak, but—I saw by his looks, he disapproved of this wild scheme of his wife : I therefore proposed, that she should immediately return with Mrs. Butler, and Madame Vallmont to Bath ; and that Mr. Moncrafts should attend the corpse with me to Paris—we prevailed on her after a great many lady-like objections, to consent to this arrangement : which was no sooner fixed, than an objection was started

ed by Madame Vallmont, which was not to be obviated.

She declared her resolution, not only to attend the body, but to end her days, and leave her own to be deposited near her young friend in the convent.

I had indulged some vague distant hope of prevailing on this good woman, to accept an arm chair for herself, and a cushion for her dog, at my fire side: there were subjects which even "in narrative old age" I foresaw would amuse us—she would never tire of talking of Agnes, nor I of Harley; and the virtues of the two unfortunates were so nearly allied, they would be naturally blended; Mrs. Vallmont's prudence created respect, her years, as well as character, would blunt the edge of satire and scandal; for which, and many other reasons I had formed the aforesaid plan. But all my air castles are fallen, no settlement, friendship, or protection; will change her resolution; notwithstanding Mrs. Butler, both in your name, and her own, courted her acceptance of independance, in whatever way would most conduce to her happiness.

The woman, Lady Mary, was right, she is not fit for the world, nor the world for her—I wish you could see with what delicate courage, what mournful composure, she declines every assistance in the management of the defunct, she has wrapped the body dressed as she was at the time of her beatification, in a fine sheet, and laid it with the assistance of her own maid only, in the coffin. Will any good creature for love or money undertake to dispose of my weather-beaten body in the same decent manner?

We

We just hinted the heat of the weather; but she will not hear of embalmment, and begs with such earnestness, and adduces such reasons, why the sweet form of irresistible beauty, should not be submitted to the labour of mere operators; that we cannot oppose the opinion of a woman, whose notions are an honor to female delicacy.

We now wait the General's commands, and shall proceed as soon as we receive them—the ladies on their return to Bath, Father Dominick, Reuben, Madame Vallmont, the little waiting girl, and myself to Dover.—

Would I could add any thing in comfort to my friend; had I the power, if my own feelings would permit me, I should certainly attempt it; since it was the saying of a very sensible fellow, “that it is the criterion of true manhood to *feel* those impressions of sorrow, it cannot resist, and to *admit* not be *above* consolation.” But alas Madam! very wise things may be said and wrote, when sorrow is at a distance, it is at present too near us all to add practice to theory.

I have the honor to be, &c.

J. MELROSE.

L E T T E R XXXV.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Bath.

Dear Sir,

I Can only say it is the General's desire, that every behest of his beloved, and ever regretted niece, be scrupulously observed, and it is also his wish, that Madame de Vallmont be indulged in every request she condescends to make, both with respect to Miss Neville, and herself. I will not add to *your* distress Major, by describing *ours*; my dear Moncrass needs your presence, but we acquiesce in the obligation your humanity confers, and shall ever acknowledge your attention to our lamented relation.

We beg, sir, you will in the General's name, settle Madame Vallmont's worldly affairs, in a way that will not, either take her mind from the religious character she means to fill, nor, should she hereafter change her resolution, be a bar to her re-entrance into the world: we inclose unlimited credit on our banker, and Major Melrose will pardon our saying *we* must be the only patrons of Madame Vallmont.

The General bids me tell you, his heart will give you welcome, and need I assure you, sir, my gratitude is as lively as my friendship.

I have the honor to be, &c.

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXVI.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Simon Brown, Steward at Belle-Vue.

Bath.

Mr. Brown,

IT is our positive commands, that all our servants, dependants and tenants, at Belle-Vue; be furnished with decent mourning: and that the same funeral respect be paid in every particular to the memory of Miss Agnes Neville, niece to General Moncrass, as was shewn to the late Countess, my mother; you are to take particular care to order the bells to toll, and to distribute alms to the poor, in every town, and village through which the hearse passes, in the way to Dover; you are to attend the funeral, accompanied by six of our men servants; Madame Vallmont will do us the honor to use our chaise; and Peggy, Miss Neville's maid, will attend her. Madame Vallmont's own servant who we find she has discharged; will accept from me twenty guineas for mourning, and consider herself as under my particular protection; we trust you will be strictly attentive to our commands; the General, and myself will esteem your future services, as you acquit yourself on this occasion.

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXVII.

Madame Vallmont to Lady Mary Moncreafs.

Convent D —, Paris.

I AVAIL myself madam, of the opportunity of Major Melrose's return to England; and his polite offer of charging himself with my letter, to address for the last time, any of the inhabitants of the great world; and to take a long farewell of the friends, whom I nevertheless reverence and esteem.

It is not that I would have it believed, my grief at the last sad wound to my affections, in the loss of my loved young friend is the mortal stab to my wordly happiness; no, Lady Mary: but her spotless mind, and steady adherence to her religious duties; her invariable attachment to the strict tenets of honor and virtue, and her constant aspiration, even when her happiest prospects were opening, after the eternity, where *now* her unfulfilled spirit, rejoices in the bosom of the holy virgin; was an example, I thank my gracious God, I *can* want no inducement to follow; while the heaven of heavens, is open to penitent sinners.

Were it possible, madam, I could ever more stand in need of pecuniary assistance, I should honor *myself*, in accepting an obligation from Lady Mary Moncreafs, but it is not: my own little fortune will more than supply all the wants of a woman,

woman, who is disrobed of vanity ; that, and myself, I devote to the service of my Redeemer.

I am flattered by your distinction, and grateful for your offered favor ; and that my mind now soars above the one, and that I cannot need the other, does not lessen the value of your condescension, and generosity ; may you, madam, enjoy uninterrupted happiness on earth, and may we meet in an endless eternity.

The worthy Major intreats me to inform you of the manner, in which the Abbess St. Laurens received us at her convent : he will not trust his feelings to speak, or write on the subject, to you, or the General ; his heart he says, is grief worn, and he fears to add affliction, where he wishes to administer consolation.

The task, madam, is less difficult, than may be expected by those who knew not the mind of the departed saint ; and who are strangers to Madame St. Laurens.

Her consent to the espousal, of her beloved Agnes to an heretic, was extorted, by the tenderness of her solicitude, for the happiness of her young friend, with whose fondness, for the wretched Harley, she was perfectly acquainted ; yet, it was literally a consent, without approbation.

The temporal happiness of the child of her heart, as far as human foresight could perceive, was secured, in her alliance with Mr. Harley ; but, in the arms of an amiable heretic, whom she so well loved, who could vouch for her faith ? who could say *that* would remain unshaken ?

Messieurs Melrose, and Montford on the part of Harley, and the General on that of his niece, had convinced her of the unobjectionable establishment,

ment, and splendid fortune, which would attend her marriage—but those, far from dispelling the apprehensions of the Abbess, encreased them.

She considered them as snares, that might in time, undermine the principles of the religion, on which in the opinion of all good catholics, the salvation of Agnes depended; she was already lost to her, and from the gentleness of her dispositions under the influence of a sensible and beloved husband, was she not in the greatest danger of being also lost to her God?

She had pondered on these reflections, she had wept over their probability, and prayed against their influence, with a fear and anxiety, only to be conceived by those who knew her exalted friendship, and purified love, for St. Clare, and her lovely daughter.

Madame St. Lawrens can have no doubt about her own future state, the casting off her frail cloathing, is the only change necessary to her salvation: she can scarcely be called an inhabitant of the earth: but this is not enough with those whom she loved in her state of probation; she would soar into immortality.

At this period she received, the (to her) joyful intelligence that Agnes was returning to the convent—eager to recal those vows from man, which she had long wished to offer to God.

The Abbess at this welcome news, called her sisterhood together, by whom she is entirely beloved,—they were no strangers to the anxiety of her mind, they were indeed sharers in it; often had they united their fervent prayers with her's, for the salvation of Agnes; and they now, gladly joined in thankful praise, to the King of kings, for restoring her to *them*—to *himself*.

The

The unnatural union—the fatal mystery—the procrastinated developement: Madame St. Lawrens looked upon as a part of the awful curses, denounced on the children of the wicked: and rejoiced that her Agnes would escape, the further temporal vengeance of an offended God, in her convent; where she impatiently expected her arrival.

But, when the fatal tidings of her distraction, and death reached her, instead of those violent bursts of grief, which from her known fondness for the deceased were expected; all regret for Agnes, was momentarily lost in the consolation of knowing she had not participated in the guilt, and horror which marked the last sad act of her ill-fated brother: that *anguish*, not despondency; that *grief*, not a want of faith in the mercy of her God, had robb'd her of reason, and ended her life: the saint-like woman in spiritual extacy, prostrated herself at the altar, and while floods of tears streamed from her eyes, adored the Being who had preserved her Agnes, from the sin into which the despairing Harley had plunged.

Oh my child! my child! said the pious woman, my own, my beloved Agnes; how well can I spare the few short years of comfort, I fondly hoped to spend in thy society *here*. Rejoice with me, my sisters! my friends! we now know for certain we shall see again our dear sister, we no longer fear the power of an heretic, over her immortal soul.

Rejoice with me, said the holy St. Lawrens—alas! Madam her tears *would* flow—sighs of fond regret *would* rend her heart—and the poignancy of her grief *would* remind her she was yet a mortal:

tal: she sunk lifeless into the arms of an attendant nun.

We arrived at the convent soon after her recovery, she was apprised of the dying request of Agnes, and Father Dominick had left us before we entered the gates of Paris, to prepare her for our reception.

Her spirit, she confessed, shrunk from the trial. I know, said she, I ought to feel nothing but pious joy; that I should hail the approach of her remains with thankful gratitude; and such I trust I *do* feel, for the mercy God has shewn my child.—But to think I shall see her *no more*—that the embrace I took when she left my convent, should be *the last*—the *very last*,—that the eyes which looked more than tongue can utter—are *for ever* closed—that I shall *no more* see them elevated with piety, or glistening with sensibility—that the heart, where grateful affection for me, was exceeded only by that she owed her Maker, has *ceased to throb*; oh it is too! too much!

The convent-bell announced our arrival, she was before pale, a death-like hue overspread her countenance: Let us go, Father, let us meet her, as *she* deserved to be met: I no longer *feel* the weakness of mortality—I shall soon be *reunited* to my Agnes.

We passed with the corpse through the church—the grating which separates the choir, and the folding doors of the convent, were on this occasion thrown open; so that as we advanced, we perceived the good Father entering the opposite door, followed by the Lady Abbess and all the nuns, in solemn procession. The Bishop and Priest were standing at the altar.

The

The seats were crouded with fashionable people, among whom, were the St. Lawrens and de Courci familiès, who with their suites were in deep mourning ; several other people of distinction, indeed most of those who might really be termed so, wore black in compliment to them.

The coffin was borne by our attendants to the grating, where it was received on a kind of bier with straps, and carried some paces within by six nuns ; who, on a motion from the Abbess, then rested it on stools placed for that purpose.

After a solemn pause, occasioned by the involuntary burst of grief which spread like a contagion from Madame St. Lawrens through the whole sisterhood : she advanced towards the coffin, and crossing her breast, cast her streaming eyes to heaven as if to pray for fortitude.

The Major wept aloud—Mr. Moncrafts was as much affected, and poor Peggy, push'd out of our party and spreading her arms over the coffin, laid her face on it, and took her last leave of her beloved mistress, with torrents of tears.

The Abbess after struggling some time with her emotions, approached, with a look of pensive resignation, still nearer the coffin ; and in very intelligible English, and a firm tone of voice ; she kneeling thanked the Blessed Virgin for restoring the mortal part of her beloved Agnes, to their holy church ! her faith unshaken—her principles uncorrupted - and her person undefiled—for the sorrows it had pleased God to inflict on her, she lifted up with elevated looks her soul in thankfulness—whom thou lovest O God said she thou chastenest—it was the rod of thy love, which preserved our Agnes from binding her soul in covenant with a heretic ; which preserved *her* from
the

the sin into which *he* fell ; and which renders her, thus early, a pure and spotless offering to thee. We weep, but thou wilt sanctify our tears ; we *now know* our Agnes is in Paradise with thee ! heavenly Jesus ! — Great God we thank thee !

She then arose, and resting her right hand on the coffin waved her left to the gentlemen, with an action inimitably graceful ; and bowed her body ; while her tears drop'd from her eyes on the marble pavement.

Madame St. Lawrens—the dear corpse of Agnes—the sisterhood—and myself ; were then eternally shut in from a sinful world ; the grate closed, and for ever separated *me*, from friends I *esteem*, but *cannot regret*.

High mass then instantly began in the church, and as soon as it was ended, the nuns returned in procession with the corpse into the private chapel ; where we had hourly prayers as well as high mass in the church three days ; Agnes was then laid in the vault, where the Lady Abbess herself means to be inter'd.

I grieve Madam to add my fears, that an event, which happen when it may, will fill this convent with grief, is not far distant ; St. Clare's death was the menace ; but this the blow. The Abbess's health certainly declines, she honors me with her particular favor, we weep over the misfortunes of St. Clare, but she avoids mentioning Agnes.

After the last obsequies were perform'd, the gentlemen sent to request they might be permitted to pay their compliments at our grate, previous to their departure ; the Abbess returned a polite answer to the Major declining *his* visit to *her*, but Moncrafts said she, is the son of the bravest
of—

of —soldiers—the best of men—the brother of St. Clare—the———

Tears stop'd her utterance—her agonies at the mention of Agnes are indescribable: in a few moments she proceeded—Let *him* be instantly admitted; this is the last, sad trial, let him come, while yet I *can* receive him.

The countenance of the young gentleman pourtray'd his feelings, he advanced towards the Abbess with a respectful diffidence: it was in vain she attempted to speak, he knelt on one knee, and pressed her extended hand to his lips.

After several ineffectual efforts to speak she drew her veil over her face, and putting a shagreen case into his hand motioned for him to withdraw.——

He again with a look of reverence even to devotion kissed her hand; and after this silent but eloquent interview—Madame St. Lawrens sought comfort, as is *her* constant custom when oppressed by the grievous recollection of the fate of her friends, at the feet of her crucifix.

Oh Lady Mary! you should know this woman—yet after all that can be said of her, is it not her highest eulogium, that she formed the mind of Agnes? and is worthy of all the enthusiastic love and reverence that angel bore her?

The case Madam you will be told, for I think you never saw St. Clare or her daughter, contains a most exquisite likeness of each, if I may judge of the former, by the latter; and that of Madame St. Lawrens is I think one of the finest paintings I have seen——The jewels in which they are set, and ornamented, are a proof of the magnificent spirit of the venerable Marchioness St. Lawrens—at whose particular request they
were

here sent to her jeweller's, to be set according to her directions.

I have only one thing now Madam to add, it is in respect to the deed which Father Dominick will deliver to General Moncrafts. I enclosed a letter * written by Agnes to Madame St. Laurens on the subject, when it was executed; which will prove to you, it was her own deliberate act: as long as she retained her senses, I know it was her first wish that her father's *vices*, her mother's *injuries*, and her *own* and her *brother's misfortunes* should be sunk in oblivion.

I perfectly comprehend the nobleness of that spirit, which impels you to make public her affinity to the General, and to pay every possible regard to the memory of St. Clare even at the expence of yourself, and daughter; but consider, Lady Mary, both St. Clare and Agnes are now equally above worldly *honour*—and *injuries*. With such a deed in your possession for the future security of your daughter, you who are so sanguine to pay respect to the memory of the deceased, and to fulfil all her other behests, will not I trust oppose her in this her *principal one*: but consider Mr. Neville's *villany* as yet undiscovered; his *wife* as unheard of; and the hapless *Agnes*, as never to have existed.

And should the fatal story ever find its way into the world; I pray it may be through some humane being, who will drop a sympathetic tear to the memory of the dead, and in respect to the living, conceal their names and throw an impenetrable veil over their real characters.

Farewell, Madam, after telling you; the General and your Ladyship; his son, and your

* See letter XXVII, of Agnes to Madame St. Laurens.

daughter ; the worthy Mrs. Butler her gentle unassuming daughter-in-law, her sensible son, and every person to whom Agnes was dear ; have the constant prayers of this convent, what more acceptable can be added from

LEONORA DE VALLMONT.

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

*Major Melrose to Madame Vallmont.**London.**Madam,*

THE date of this letter will inform you, I am returned to my own solitary home. You commanded me to write, and tho' I had so little influence over *you*, I am you see a tractable old Grecian, fair words will make me do wonderful things.

I have *breathed*, for I deny its being *living*, three days in my own warm corner; I say to one—go—and he goeth—to another—come—and he cometh—but tho' the poor devils certainly do their best; they neither come, nor go, to please me.

If the whim takes me, I may, with impunity kick all my domestics down stairs; tho' I desire you, and your black veil'd sisterhood will understand, it is a whim that very seldom *does* take me.

Jermyn-street, with my little box in the middle of it, stands exactly as I left it. My black-fellow in conjunction with my honest old house-keeper, pique themselves not a little, on the excellent order of the territories over which they have presided. I do not perceive a cat more, or less, than when I whirl'd out of town, to be present at a fatal ceremony *never* out of my *mind*;

yet with all these privileges, comforts, and *so forth*, I find myself in a very scurvy mood.

Were you ever Madam afflicted with the English malady called the vapours or hypo? if not, permit me to recommend it to you, to put up prayers in your convent immediately, that it may be always as effectually separated from you, as him, who is at this moment, groaning most lamentably under its tyranny.

'Tis a plaguy thing to feel oneself as Shakespere says, "Subject to every skiey influence, the sport of every paltry atom," to owe the ease of one's mind not only to the disposition of one's body, but almost to every thing which surrounds us.

The fact is, Madam, I am now, and have been ever since I left Paris, aye and long before I went there; whatever face I might put on the matter, internally wretched: and as it is blowing at this time, a cursed cold easterly wind, I could fancy myself surrounded with hobgoblins.

I have wished to write to you every hour, but the chief prerogative of the aforesaid malady, is to prevent one from doing, what one has the best mind to; and what indeed, would be most likely to effect a cure; finding however like all other encroachers, the less I resist, the more potent it grows; I have turned to my secretaire with a firm resolution to be very well, while I am writing to you.

My tablets are before me, your commands I see were, That I should inform you of our arrival in England, Reception at Bath, The General's health, Lady Mary's procedure in respect to the last request of the best of young women, and a few other mem's, all of which I shall come to in time.

We

We arrived—but what does that signify?—suppose us at the Crescent.

Lady Mary and her daughter met us at the drawing-room door; the emotions of Julia, were a kind hysterical mixture of joy, and grief; she clasped her arms round her husband, rejoiced at his return, then wept for — but like Madame St. Lawrens, we will resolve *not to name her*.

Lady Mary's low, and graceful curtsy, without speaking, was at once eloquent, and affecting; she extended her hand, and led me in silence, to the General's apartment.

Our friend! my dear Ruben, said she, sinking beside him, on the sofa, and bursting into tears.

Mary, my beloved Mary! said the General, his voice scarcely articulate—he returned my affectionate embrace, and we were all silent.

Lady Mary still wept—*my* eyes were fixed on the carpet—and the General groaned, both from mental and bodily pain.——

Oh Major! said he, after a few moments—had I followed your counsel, had I revealed——

Why my dearest Reuben, interrupted Lady Mary, will you give way to these unavailing regrets?

Unavailing indeed! repeated he sighing—but it is a debt due to *you*—the concealment—the secrecy I mistakenly thought incumbent on me to observe; my ill judged adherence to a rash promise, which would not have been extorted, had my unhappy sister known its importance to my peace; has been the destruction of *her*, whom it was meant to serve; and it has filled every

faculty of my soul, with unutterable grief ; oh Major ! what a wreck of all that was lovely in woman and amiable in man have you seen ; how terrible must have been those agonies, which could so totally unhinge a mind, so perfect, so placid as hers.

Major, said Lady Mary, interrupting him again, I dare not leave you together ; *your* mind will naturally revert to the dear, the regretted objects, we have so recently lost ; the General is distressingly mindful of every particular, on which it is hurtful for him to dwell ; one point only remains to be settled, which requires no discussion.

I shou'd have felt a laudable, an innate gratification, in the public acknowledgment of Miss Neville, as the legal heiress of her father ; and have considered, the exposing the covert acts of a libertine, as a *debt due* to *humanity* ; that the *warning* and *example*, might at least operate, for the future *benefit* of mankind : but the request of Agnes, the opinion of Madame De Vallmont, have *their due influence* : I give up my *own* wish, to *theirs* ; the will of the deceased, shall be punctually complied with.

The General was going to speak, but she pressed her cheek wet with tears to his ; and implored him to suffer the subject to be changed. We have settled, my Reuben, said the charming woman ! all that is necessary ; let us not be so selfish, as to confine our solicitude, to our own concerns, the Major looks ill, he has suffered from the fatigue of travelling, as well as from mental disquiet : we must *now* endeavour to give rest to *his mind*, as well as body.

Thus

Thus did the amiable Lady Mary, govern the weakness of two lords of the creation; and thus did she continue to encrease her ascendancy, over her fond husband; by a rational, and unwearied attention, to those sorrows, which notwithstanding all, *still* corrode in his bosom.

I continued with them eight days, and it was with reluctance, they would then suffer me to depart. But I found myself indisposed, and fancied, that when seated on my own throne, vulgarly called an elbow chair, I should be better; and so I told her ladyship, when notwithstanding all her polite, and friendly invitations, I left them.

But—I no sooner arrived *here*, no sooner mounted my *throne*, than my vagrant ideas carried me away to Belle-Vue, I wanted to be reading the most expressive countenance nature ever formed; I languished for the opening of two coral lips, which are *for ever closed*; I listened after the sound of a voice, *no more heard*.

I abdicated my throne, and rambled from one apartment, to another; but change of place had no power over my mind; I remembered the delightful ranges over bricks, stones, and mortar; which very happily engrossed my attention at the Hermitage; the grateful effusions of the heart of him, on whose arm I then hung, recur'd to my memory, and I found, I wanted support, across my own little dressing room. Then came the villainous English malady, which I have for the present routed, by writing to you.

Had you, madam, been so generous, as to weigh your own gratification, in your retirement, against the good, your society would have done, the soul of a *very honest fellow*! you would have been now here in person, to chase away this formidable enemy.

I will

I *will* call myself an *honest fellow*, tho' if you were to know the horrors, I am continually a prey to, you would be apt to believe I was haunted by one of the most troublesome rascals of a conscience, that ever poor sinner was tormented with. But it is a *lying malady*, I repeat it, *I am an honest fellow* ! Never drew my sword in cold blood, nor uttered a falsehood with intent to deceive, in my life ! never got a dirty shilling, nor turned my back on a friend, or foe in distress ! some little flirtation with your bewitching sex, may perhaps rise up in judgment against me ; but no seduction, no plots for the corrupting of innocence, no desertion of whatever female chose to put her trust in me ; *once* in my life, and *but once* ; I had a hankering after a pretty little harmless thing, daughter to one of my serjeants ; and believe I should have succeeded, but the father was killed in an engagement—the mother broke her heart—the girl became naturally a kind of protegee—and *that* ended the affair—thank God that it *did end so*—what a devil of a hand, would this same English malady make of me, if among the many phantoms it raises to harass me, I beheld *in my mind's eye*, the two murdered mothers, Agnes Moncrals, and Sophia Woodburne, with their respective children.

Gallantry ! Libertinism ! for I begin to think they are synonymous terms, unfeeling monsters ! with what effrontery do they stalk into the first societies in this refined age ; *how* boldly spread their destructive snares, how proudly view the conquests which are followed by shame, despair and death ; and how unblushing hear the story of those innocents, who are every day discovered, to be their victims !

Oh

Oh Madam! now that the calamities I have witnessed in our small circle, carries my mind yet farther into the consequences of this vice; I actually tremble!

While a man of the world pursues a common act of gallantry, which, in *his* estimation, is a mere bagatelle, how may not delicacy, honor, and even human nature, be wounded: what actions abhorrent to God, and unsuspected by man, may he not himself commit, and entail on his posterity.

How many titles, gained by the manly exertions of some brave loyalist. How many hereditary estates, purchased with the blood and life of some antient progenitor fall to the offspring of intrigue! while the real heir of a noble family, and large estates, with all the fire, high spirit, and fine sentiments of his race; feels his innate worth, cramp'd within the narrow powers of a portionless younger brother.

How many respectable fathers, feel the shame of a seduced daughter, glow on their burning cheeks! while conscience perhaps, pleads the *great*, and *just* law of retribution! If indignant honor triumph over paternal affection, and he spurns her from him, *who* will protect *her*, who is abandoned by her *own father*?

But if tenderness prove stronger than resentment, he sinks under the sorrow she inflicts, and feels a dagger in the commiseration she excites.

How many noble matrons, whose lives have pass'd in the amiable, the celestial duties of a virtuous wife, a tender mother, retreat in anguish from observation; and deluges her private apartment with tears, wrung from her unspotted soul, by the weakness and folly, of *that daughter*, whose beauty,

beauty, elegance, and sparkling wit, was *once* her *proud boast*.

How many of the less valuable mothers, conceal, in inexorable resentment, the internal reproaches of her own heart, for the unguarded example, careless instruction, and neglected education, *she* has given her ill taught daughter. Amid the disappointment of hope, the pity of friends, and the scorn of enemies; amidst the bitterest of all evils, the self-reproach of a bad parent, is the greatest.

And can we madam refuse the sigh of regret, the tear of pity to the thousands of beautiful faces, *now* deprived of their first grace, *modesty!* whom we meet among all ranks, and description of people. The same eyes sparkle in the side box to-day, that offend our senses on a dunghill to-morrow. The day opens on their innocence, health, and peace, it closes on their infamy, disease, and desperation, yet they were all once innocent, designed by heaven for the *ornament*, but rendered by *man*, the *pest* of society.

In the rising generation, God defend us Madam! what an instance has the fate of our poor young friends afforded, of the unnatural unions, the scenes of abomination, which *may* be, and undoubtedly daily *are*, the consequences of that indiscriminate freedom of manners, that disgrace the present age.

Oh to stretch invention, to search the east for a jewel, to crown the ingenuity of that being, who should invent a means of preventing an evil so growing, so contagious.

Should the sad tale we have witnessed, be ever known to the world; should it speak to the heart of one of the many Neville's, who flutter round
the

the young and gay ; should it hold a mirror to his heart, and persuade one libertine to abandon his triumph, e'er it is compleat ; *Edward* nor *Agnes* will have died in *vain*.

I had written so far, when wanting heart to conclude, I gave myself up to my sworn enemy : I ate without appetite, drank without gout, and after numberless efforts, slept without resting, and so fine — die.

I have been so long used to converse with people of *your sort*, Madam, that I could not bear to level myself at once to the common run of how d'ye's, who have done their best towards wearing out the knocker of my door. But yesterday a pretty modest rap, given by a servant who seemed to know the master of the house was but *ill at ease*, was followed by the entrance of a lady, her nurse, and a fine little boy, named Edward Harley.

Mrs. Butler heard I was in town, and indispensed. Poor girl ! she has little of that Hebe I carried to Belle-Vue ; left in her own countenance.

Her tears did not flow, but gradually filled her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

She called me her *brother's friend* ! and pointed to my observation, the features of her boy, which she *would* persuade me resembled *his*.

She said I was too much alone — and shewed me a letter from Mrs. Dowager Butler, replete with good sense, in which, among other things, she desired her daughter would prevail on me to escort her to Mr. Montford's, where Mr. Butler, and herself were to meet us ; and while away the dismal months, of November, and December.

Mr. Montford, said Mrs. Butler, the tears still rolling

rolling down her cheeks, begs you will honor him with your company. He is a plain man, but what he wants in elegance, he will make up in real goodness of heart. His house is within twenty miles of Bath; the General's family make frequent excursions there. My mother is never what is termed very merry, but then neither is she ever sad, the philanthropy of her disposition renders her anxious to impart the happy equality of her own mind, to her friends, and in this amiable endeavour she is often successful.

We cannot promise to be gay, but I hope we shall in time be chearful; our party will be happier, and our hearts improved, by the society of Major Melrose; my little Edward will steal into his heart, and his mother will merit his commendation, by teaching her son the simple graces of his unfortunate namesake.

Well, Madam, I have suffer'd myself to be coaxed by this good-hearted girl, again to leave my own throne; and I am going to Montford's, where I perhaps may recover some degree of chearfulness, but as to gaiety, a distinction Mrs. Butler very properly made——

- “ Save me from the gaiety of those
- “ Whose head-achs nail them to a noonday bed;
- “ And save me from those whose haggard eyes
- “ Flash desperation and betray their pangs
- “ For property stripped off by cruel chance,
- “ From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
- “ The mouth with calphemy, the heart with woe.”

Adieu, Madam, may you enjoy a double portion of that happiness of which your obstinacy deprives him who will nevertheless always think of you with esteem and affection.

J. MELROSE.

F I N I S.



